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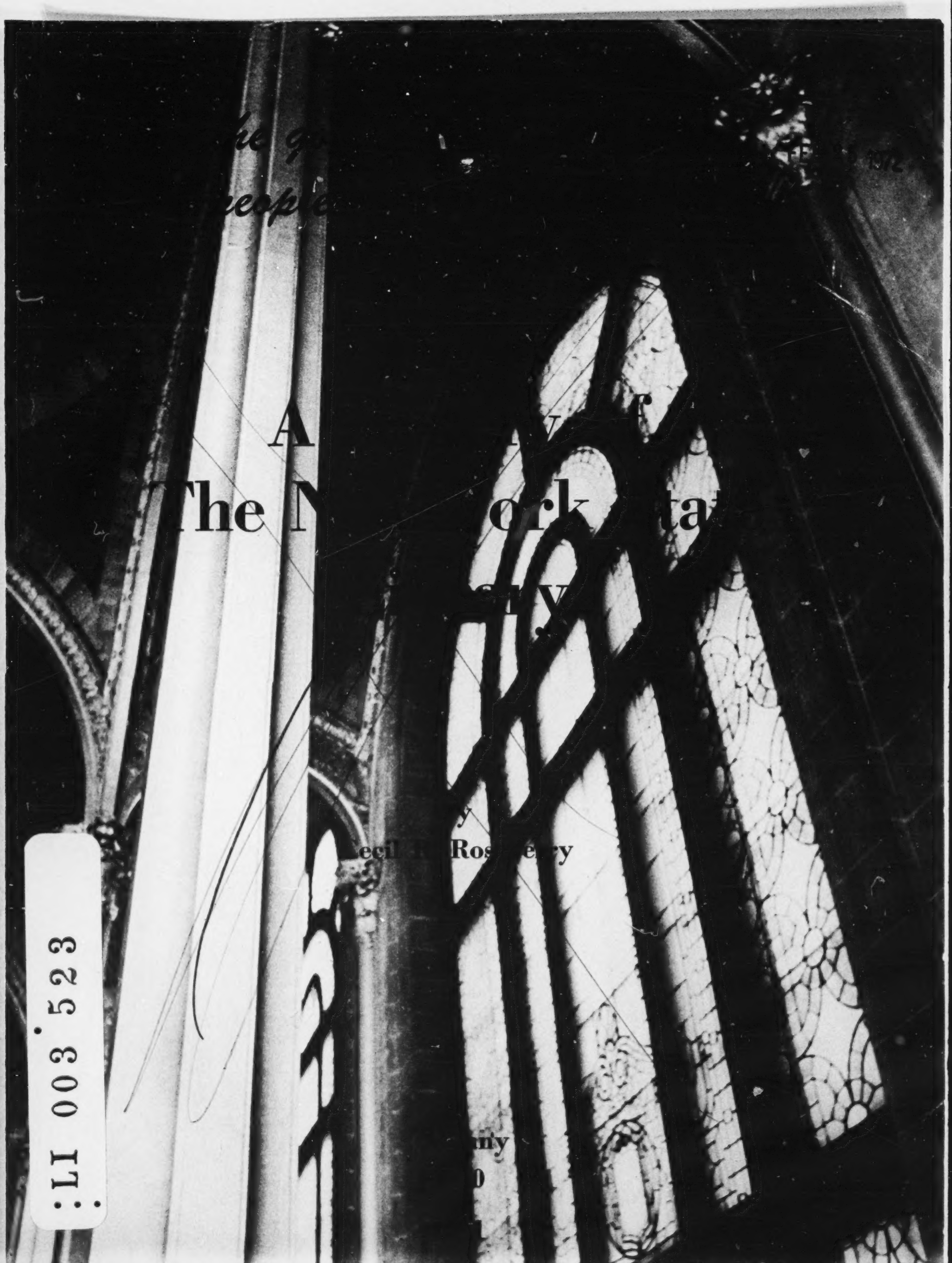
ABSTRACT

The history of the New York State Library is traced from its inception on 1818 to the present, and includes a picture and mention of the future home of the library, the Cultural Center which is scheduled for completion in 1972. The narrative history is accompanied by various photographic illustrations. (SJ)



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For the Government and People of This State

A History of The New York State Library

by

Cecil R. Roseberry

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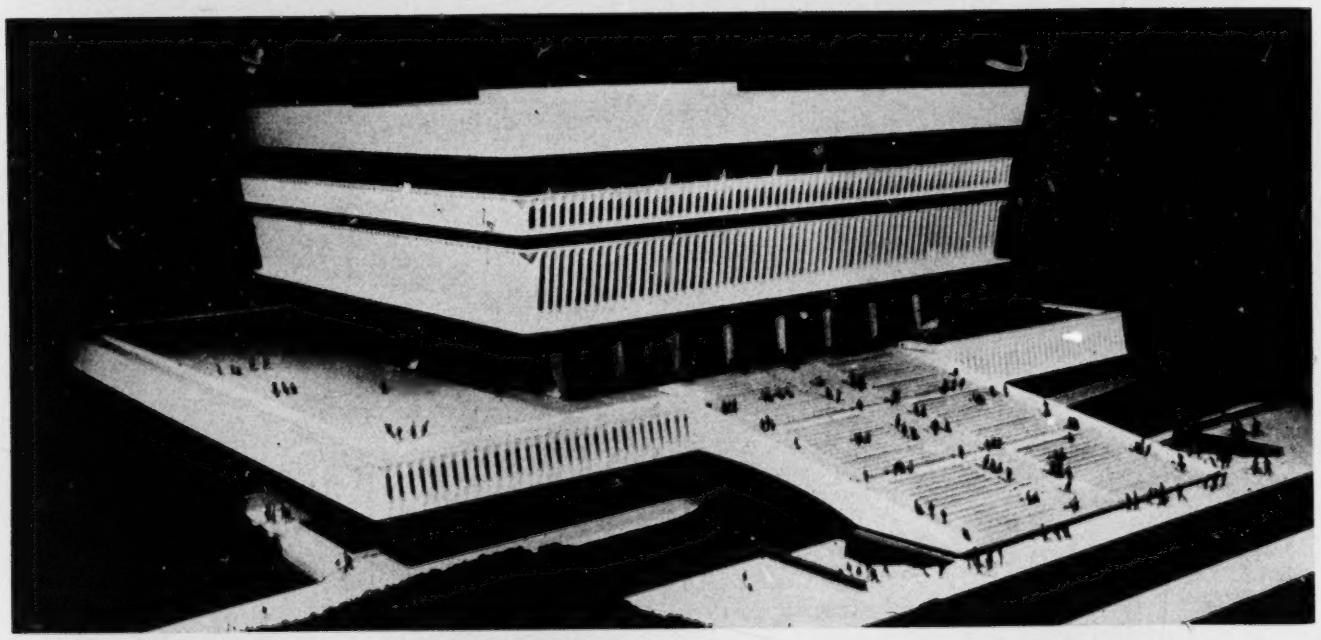


Contents

1. Mr. Clinton Comes to Town 1
2. Books and Politics 9
3. Regents Take the Reins 15
4. Ventriloquist With a Vision 19
5. The Poet as Librarian 25
6. A Roof of Its Own 31
7. Garnering Treasures 35
8. Scholar-Librarian 43
9. 'Cribbed, Coffined, and Confined' 49
10. A Turn of the Page 53
11. 'Strange Combativ Years' 61
12. Careers for Women 67
13. Libraries on Wheels 71
14. A Parting of Ways 75
15. Wanted: A New Home 81
16. Alarm in the Night 85
17. Rebirth 93
18. 'Again. . . A Noble Library' 101
19. Into the Electronic Era 107
20. A Note on Sources 113
21. Index 117

1. Mr. Clinton Comes to Town

On July 1 of the year 1817, the recently established *Albany Argus* printed an item of news so frustratingly brief that a reporter of later time would have been soundly reprimanded, if not discharged, for turning it in. But then, doubtless the editor wrote it himself:

"His Ex. Gov. Clinton arrived in the Steam Boat on Sunday Evening and will be inducted into office this day."

His Excellency DeWitt Clinton checked in at Rockwell's Mansion House in the quaint capital city where, in another century, a leading hotel would flaunt his name in red neon letters from its rooftop. In the morning of the appointed day, a parade of militia and a brass band formed in front of the hostelry to escort him up the hill from the riverfront. Standing beneath the trim Grecian portico of the Capitol, Mr. Clinton took the oath as fifth Governor of the State which his uncle, George Clinton, had served so long and conscientiously as the first. When the oath was sworn, fieldpieces boomed a full Federal salute and acrid powder smoke drifted across the Capitol lawn.

Governor Clinton then returned to New York, as a passenger on one of the Fulton Line's sidewheelers, to participate in a Fourth of July parade. That same day excavation was started at Rome for the Erie Canal, which his political foes jeered as "Clinton's Ditch." A fortnight later Clinton journeyed along the Mohawk Valley, enthusiastically greeted in every settlement through which he passed, to be at a meeting of the Canal Commissioners in Utica. From that village, which the "ditch" was so soon to make a thriving city, the Commissioners rode out to Rome to inspect the digging. It was then that Clinton belatedly turned the symbolic spade of earth. His advocacy of the stupendous canal project had swept him into the governorship on a floodtide of ballots, and now he stood on a pinnacle of popularity with the common people of his State, though many politicians felt otherwise about him.

Back at Albany, he had to locate a home for his wife and seven children. The State did not yet provide an Executive Mansion, and Governors had to rent their own. Clinton leased a comfortable townhouse at 62 North Pearl Street, within strolling distance of the Capitol. Among the belongings shipped from New York via Hudson River sloop was his most cherished possession—his library. He had been accumulating books over the years since he had served his uncle, Governor George Clinton, as secretary. DeWitt Clinton was both an adept politician and a scholarly gentleman; indeed, he was possibly the most erudite of New York's Governors. A contemporary, David Hosack, said of Clinton that "he had a large and well selected library of scarce and valuable works."

Clinton's election had taken place in the spring of 1817, although it was an off-year. The preceding Governor, Daniel D. Tompkins, had resigned in mid-term because of his election as Vice-President of the United States. While his Lieutenant Governor, John Tayler, filled the interim, the Legislature ordered a special election for Governor in April. Just before the voting, the same Legislature—under public pressure engendered by a forceful memorial from Clinton—ended its wrangling and passed the Canal Bill. Even the dapper and crafty little State Senator from Kinderhook, Martin Van Buren, who had fiercely opposed both the Canal and Clinton, saw how the wind was blowing and gave in. To York Staters, Clinton was the hero of the hour, and they elected him Governor overwhelmingly, together with John Tayler as Lieutenant Governor.

Settling in at Albany, Clinton renewed a pleasant acquaintance with Chancellor James Kent, of the Court of Chancery, one of the most learned men in State office, who lived on Columbia Street within two blocks of Clinton. These two shared a passion for literature and Kent, too, owned a large library. The Chancellor read classics in the original Greek, and once wrote: "My library has at present prodigious charms and incomprehensible interests." Again, he confided: "Next to my wife, my library has been the source of my greatest pleasure and devoted attachment."

In all probability, a third party to the congenial circle was Judge Smith Thompson, chief justice of the State Supreme Court, who had "read law" in Chancellor Kent's office in Poughkeepsie. Thompson was deemed "a man of great learning, both legal and general."

It is logical to surmise that such a meeting of minds hatched the idea of a library for the uses of State government. The mental climate in high places at Albany was plainly inviting to such a thought, with devoted booklovers in league together and Governor Clinton in a position of great influence to press it.

Other favorable factors were at work. The intellectual ferment in the wake of the French Revolution had

bridged the Atlantic. The Napoleonic wars had subsided, along with the related War of 1812, loosing energies which had been bottled up, as instanced by the tackling of the Erie Canal. Freed from menace to their seaboard and concern with Europe, Americans began facing into the sunset and thinking continentally. Steamboats were on the rivers, railroads were in the offing.

Widening horizons included those of the intellect. Thus far, most worthwhile literature emanated from overseas, and the important libraries were in Europe. In the State of New York at this moment could be counted only 27 libraries of a public nature, none of much consequence. The combined number of volumes in those of New York City was not over 12,000.

Libraries at seats of government had been known since ancient Assyria and Alexandria, but had yet to gain a real foothold in young America. True, a Library of Congress had been started in 1800, then ruthlessly destroyed when the British occupied Washington in 1814 and put the torch to the unfinished Capitol (its much-deplored burning was at least partly in revenge for what Yankees had done earlier to the Parliament buildings of Upper Canada, at York, the Toronto-to-be, when books of the library made a bonfire). The reviving Library of Congress was still in a temporary attic home, awaiting repair of the Capitol, when Clinton came to Albany.

The movement toward state libraries is regarded as having been triggered by a resolution of the Massachusetts Legislature in 1811 asking its Secretary of State to correspond with other states about the possibility of a yearly exchange of statutes. A further impetus was given in 1813 when Congress enacted a measure to send copies of all its laws, journals, and documents to every state. If documents were to pile up, then they needed storage and accessibility.

Two state libraries antedated the one which was now to take root at Albany: Pennsylvania's in 1816 and Ohio's in 1817. New Hampshire was a step behind New York.

As he rounded the corner from Pearl into State Street, Governor Clinton must have daily passed the Bank & Exchange Coffee House (the coffee house being actually a tavern in those days). His eye would have been caught by the establishment attached to it—John Cook's Reading Room and Library. This was the nearest thing to a public library which Albany, with a population of 10,000, had to offer, and it was open only to paid subscribers. The literary-minded Governor surely would have stopped in and made the acquaintance of its proprietor. While looking around, he may even have quaffed a bumper of the mineral water which was part of the stock-in-trade.

John Cook was an expatriate Englishman of bookish taste. Arriving for some obscure reason in Dutch-dominated Albany, he opened a reading-room in 1809—"an institution probably better supplied with newspapers, and other periodical publications, than any other in the United States," as a traveler observed. Cook quickly won favor for his modesy, industry, and probity, and particularly "because he has widely abstained from nauseating the public by any of those fulsome addresses so common amongst vulgar men, but which always defeat their object."

A patron of Cook's resort paid $6 a year for use of the reading-room only, which meant access to the newspapers and periodicals; $10 if the circulating library of books was part of the privilege. In the year before Clinton's election, Cook issued a public plea for more patronage, saying he had 131 subscribers and would have to close up shop unless he could find more support. Obviously his appeal had results.

* * * *

To eke out his income, John Cook carried on an auxiliary business as a "purveyor of mineral waters." Saratoga and Ballston Spas, not distant from Albany, were fashionable resorts and their effervescent waters were highly regarded for presumed medicinal qualities. Cook obtained his beverages from those sources, and was credited with a special method of preserving their "elasticity", or effervescence. The waters were available to readers from a "fountain" in an alcove, and Cook also sold bottled lots for home consumption.

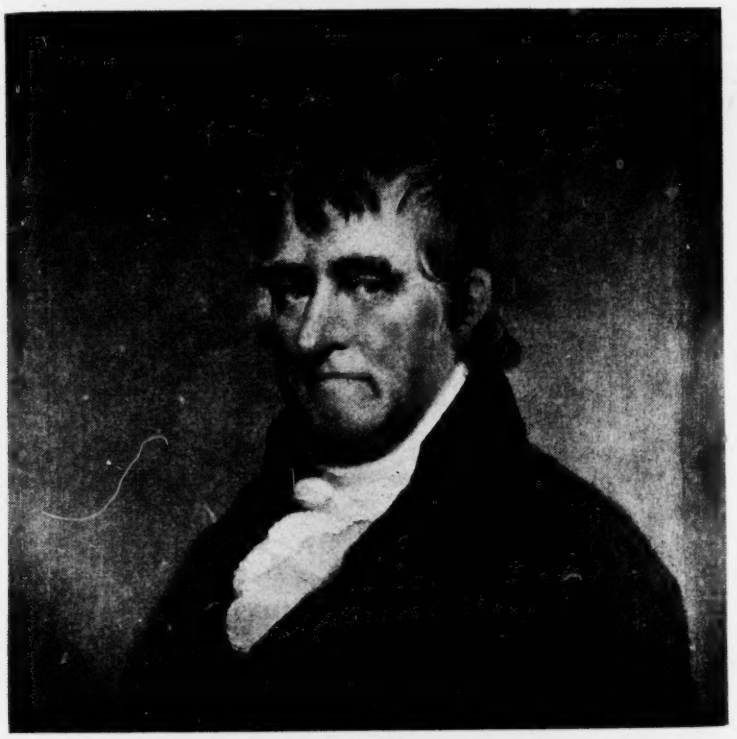
John Cook had mineral-water competitors in Albany, but they lacked the advantage of reading-rooms. He advertised, in a footnote: "The room fitted up for the Ladies is entirely detached from the public rooms." Crediting him with having improved the tone of Albany life, a literary magazine noted: "Mr. Cook it is said has even succeeded in abolishing the practice of smoking cigars in the evening, which had obtained to great excess in his former situation: this is . . . certainly a triumph Mr. Cook has obtained for decency and cleanliness."

All in all, if someone were to cast about Albany for a librarian of any real experience and the proper temperament, John Cook was the man. One must assume that Governor Clinton was amply aware of his presence.

DeWitt Clinton confronted his first Legislature, as chief executive, on January 27, 1818, to deliver a message which was exemplary for both its literacy and its progressive content.

Frick Art Reference Library

Governor DeWitt Clinton was godfather to the New York State Library, established just after the Erie Canal was begun. The portrait by the Albany artist, Ezra Ames, is dated by his account book as 1818, the year the library was founded.

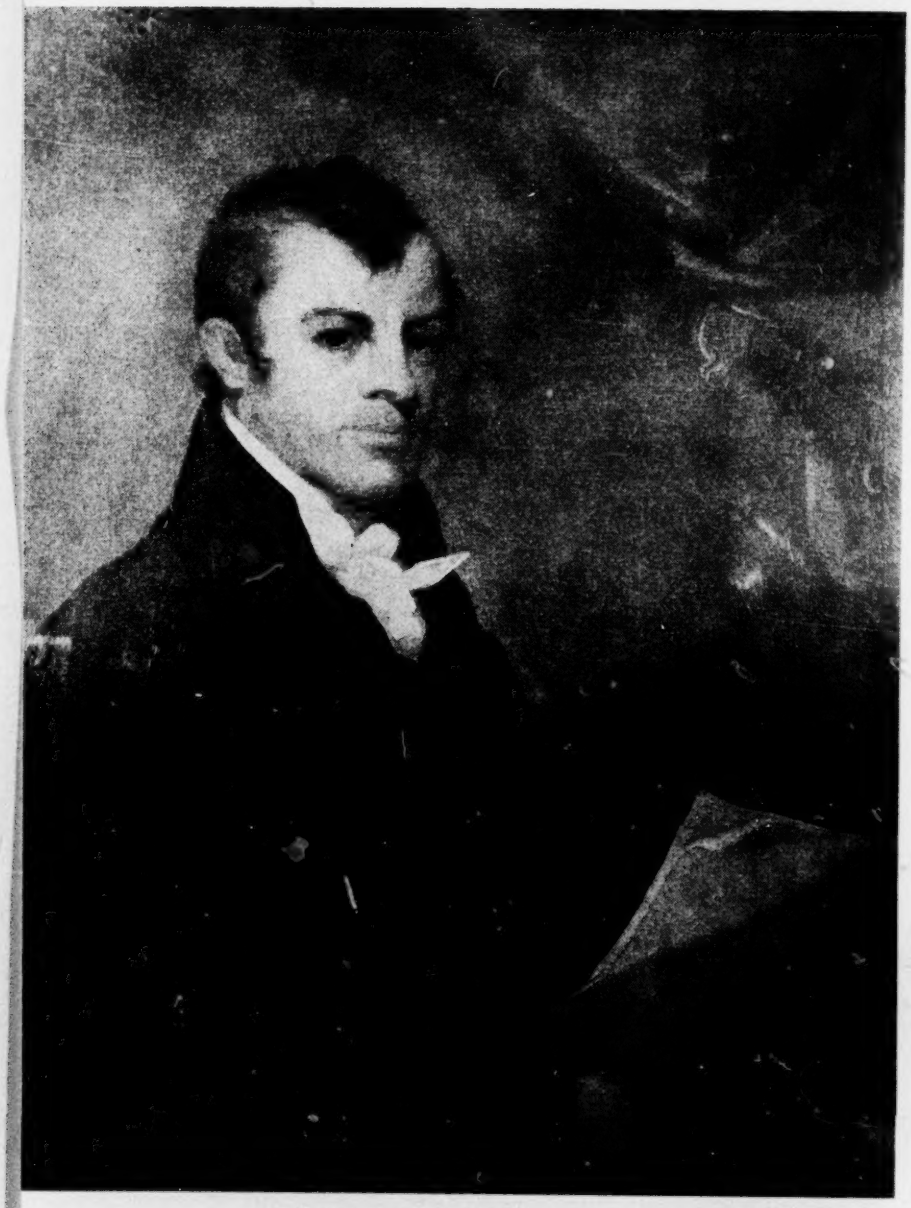


As Clinton's Lieutenant Governor, John Tayler was one of the original trustees of the State Library. He already owned a valuable collection of the papers of Sir William Johnson, and this ultimately came into the library. Artist, Ezra Ames.

THE ORIGINAL
BALLSTON
&
CONGRESS
FOUNTAINS
THE public are respectfully informed that JOHN COOK has taken into copartnership his son Edward H. in the Water and Reading Room establishment, they continue to furnish the mineral waters of Ballston and Saratoga in the usual manner by the quantity in bottles put up at the Springs under their immediate inspection, or on draft from the fountains as practiced for thirteen years past, at the Reading Room No. 353, next door south of the Mansion House kept by J. W. Rockwell and opposite that kept by N. S. Skinner, North Market Street, Albany.
N. B. The waters in bottles put up by J. C. & Son, will always be supplied by Mr. Crutteuden at the same price as at their Room.
Albany, June 6 1820. 7tf.

Advertisement of John Cook's mineral water business, conducted jointly with his public reading room, printed in the Albany Argus in 1820. It announced that he had taken his son into partnership, presumably because of the time Cook now had to spend in his part-time job as State Librarian.

Albany Institute of History and Art



Chancellor James Kent, another member of the first board of trustees of the State Library, who may have donated books to it from his private library. Portrait by Ezra Ames, circa 1815.

This Legislature convened in an atmosphere of euphoria unprecedented on Capitol Hill, where political frictions were the rule. The State government was embarked upon a public-works project that was fiscally daring and sensational in its dimensions. Naturally, the canal scheme had drawn the spotlight of the whole nation. So stunning had been Clinton's victory at the polls that many of his best supporters rode into the Legislature with him. The citizens had spoken with so loud a voice that even his bitterest enemies were chastened (for the time being) and in a mood to give him what he asked for. That Legislature was "full of distinguished men," as Thurlow Weed was to recall in his memoirs. To mention a few, there were: Stephen Van Rensselaer, the "last Patroon" and perhaps the wealthiest man in America; Martin Van Buren, who was at the same time Senator and Attorney General; and Cadwallader Colden, who had just published the first biography of his friend and Governor Clinton's, the late Robert Fulton.

As Mayor of New York, Clinton had been energetic in promoting cultural and literary activities in that city. Among these was the New York Institution, a cluster of literary, artistic, and historical societies brought together under one roof. Universal popular education was a fetish with Clinton.

His introductory message to the Legislature made no direct mention of a State library, but the proposal was germinating. After dwelling at considerable length upon scientific agriculture, waterways, and academic education, Clinton cited the New York Institution as an illustration of desirable agencies for the public betterment. "Whenever such institutions appear," he said, "they are entitled to the countenance of government, for there will ever be an intimate and immutable alliance between their advancement and the glory and prosperity of the state."

Assemblyman Thomas J. Oakley was entering his second year as a legislator, and was the recognized leader in the Assembly of the faction which was a bulwark of Clinton's support. He was a respected lawyer from Poughkeepsie (whence hailed both Chancellor Kent and Justice Thompson). Soon he supplanted Van Buren as Attorney General, and in after years he would be chief justice of the Superior Court of New York City. On March 9, 1818, Mr. Oakley arose to introduce this motion in the Assembly:

"*Resolved,* That a committee be appointed to inquire into the expediency of providing by law for the establishment of a public library, for the use of the government."

The motion passed and a three-man committee was named, Oakley at its helm. On March 18 he asked to bring in a bill, and the Assembly Journal recorded:

"Mr. Oakley, according to leave, brought in the said bill, entitled 'an act for the establishment of a public library at the seat of government', which was read for the first time, and by unanimous consent was read a second time, and committed to a committee of the whole house."

Obviously the machinery for putting through the library bill was smoothly oiled.

On April 18, after some minor amendments, the bill was engrossed and the Assembly passed it and sent it across to the Senate for action. On April 21, amid the

last-day rush at the end of the session, the Senate passed it without change. Governor Clinton lost no time in signing it into law. The full text of this law follows:

> 1. Be it enacted by the People of the State of New York represented in Senate and Assembly, That the governor, lieutenant govenor, chancellor and chief justice of the supreme court, for the time being, shall constitute a board of trustees, whose duty it shall be to cause to be fitted up some proper room in the capitol, for the purpose of keeping therein a public library for the use of the government and people of this state; and that it shall be the duty of the said trustees to cause to be expended the money appropriated by this act, or which may be hereafter appropriated, in fitting up of such room, and in the purchase of such books, maps and other literary publications for the use of the said library as they may deem expedient.
>
> 2. And be it further enacted, That the said trustees shall have power from time to time to appoint some proper person to superintend and take care of the said library, and shall prescribe such rules and regulations for the government of the same as they shall think proper; and the said librarian shall receive such compensation for his services as the said trustees shall allow: Provided, however, that the said trustees shall by their by-laws to be established for the regulation of the said library, provide among other things, that no book, map or other publication shall be at any time taken out of the library for any purpose whatever.
>
> 3. And be it further enacted, That for the purposes of carrying this act into effect, there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of three thousand dollars and also the further annual sum of five hundred dollars; which said several sums shall be paid out of any monies in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, on the warrant of the comptroller.

The four State officials designated as trustees were: Governor DeWitt Clinton, Lieutenant Governor John Tayler, Chancellor James Kent, and Chief Justice Smith Thompson. If the law were framed to fit the men (as it may well have been), it could hardly have done better.

Not very surprisingly, the "proper person" the trustees selected for the first librarian was John Cook, the reading-room proprietor. The compensation they prescribed for him was $300 a year. This was not so trifling a salary as it sounds to modern ears. For comparison, a few other salaries for State jobs in 1820 were: Governor, $5,000; attorney-general, $1,000; superintendent of common schools, $400; private secretary to the Governor, $350. Moreover, it must be taken into account that Cook's job was only part-time, the library to be open only during sessions of the Legislature and the courts; that the duties were not onerous, with the few books the library would have for some years to come; and that Cook continued to operate his own business.

Even so, it appears that the "keeper of the library" had some trouble collecting his pay for the first session. The Assembly Journal contains this entry for April, 1819:

"The petition of John Cook of the city of Albany, praying for compensation for services as librarian of the state library, was received.

"Thereupon,

"Leave was given to bring in a clause to be added to some proper bill."

The edifice in which the State Library was first housed had been occupied itself less than 10 years, and was an object of admiration on the Albany scene. It stood on the crest of a hill facing squarely down the wide State Street to the waterfront where the three steamboats, at that time monopolistically operated by the so-called Fulton Line, tied up in their shuttle between Albany and New York. Designed by the Albany builder-architect, Philip Hooker, it looked forth proudly through a portico of four Ionic columns; and it was crowned with a cupola typical of Hooker's American-classic style. Because the city had donated the Capitol's site and a fraction of its cost, the municipality shared the building with the State government. On the first floor were the two legislative chambers, the Governor's chamber, and the Mayor's office.

The State Library began its life in a single, simple room on the second floor. Its neighbors there were the Supreme Court, the Court of Chancery, the Court of Common Pleas, the Court of General Sessions, the Mayor's Court, and the Board of Supervisors. The third (or attic) story was so far untenanted.

The Albany papers paid small heed to the fact that a State Library was being launched in their midst, but on November 20, 1818, the *Argus* said that the Trustees "have made considerable progress in the purchase of a library for the use of the members of the Legislature, &c. A room has been fitted up in the Capitol, and Mr. John Cook appointed to take charge of the library—a part of which has already arrived."

It is believed that DeWitt Clinton personally chose most of the original books. This may well have been the case, as he spent part of the summer of 1818 in and around New York City where book-marts flourished. On the other hand, it was a difficult summer for him.

His wife's health had been failing seriously, and he took her to Staten Island in hope that the change of air would benefit her. Despite this, Maria Clinton died on July 30, and her devoted husband was grief smitten. Not long after the funeral, he fell and broke a leg, so that he hobbled on crutches for weeks.

Logic suggests that his bookish fellow trustees, Chancellor Kent and Justice Thompson, had some role in assembling the books. Although Lieutenant Governor Tayler was rated as a person "of acute, discriminating mind," he was not of the literate inner circle. Tayler was a Revolutionary War veteran 76 years of age. It is intriguing to know that, at that very moment, he owned a hoard of Sir William Johnson papers which would come to the library many years later.

The New York State Library opened its doors upon the arrival of the 1819 Legislature, with 669 volumes and nine maps on its shelves. It has often been asserted that this library started off as almost exclusively a law library. The catalog statistics for 1819 belie this. Of the 669 volumes, 265—or considerably less than half—came under the heading of law, statute, and political economy books. That ratio persisted, in general, for some years to come. The first catalog revealed a good percentage of classic literature, of history, travel, and biography. Manifestly, the founding trustees envisioned it as not merely an adjunct of government and the courts, but as a general reference library as well.

Their first report, dated January 22, 1819, said they had "endeavored to make such a selection, within the means provided, as in their judgment would best meet the views of the Legislature, and correspond with the character of the State." They had expended $2,617.20 for books and maps; $206.06 for bookcases, curtains, a stove, and incidentals. The library had to supply its own heat, and the incidentals included firewood and candles.

The brief report was signed by Clinton, Tayler, and Kent. The absence of the name of Justice Smith Thompson is explained by the fact that President Monroe had appointed him Secretary of the Navy, and he had assumed that post on January 1; his successor as chief justice did not take office until late February, so that the library lacked a trustee during the hiatus.

The Clinton trustees set a precedent that went on for a long time—the publication of the full catalog of the library along with their report. This practice was continued even after the library had attained many thousands of titles. A sampling of the initial inventory reveals such well-chosen items as: a first edition of Chaucer's Works; Aristotle's *Ethics and Politics;* the Domesday Book; Marshall's Life of Washington; the works and life of Benjamin Franklin; the works of

Samuel Johnson and of Alexander Hamilton; and Colden's aforementioned biography of Robert Fulton, which must have been of exceptional interest to the lawgivers as its author was one of their number, and many of them were frequent passengers on the Fulton paddlewheelers. In the separately listed law section were Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* and Malthus on Population, while a good start had been made toward accumulating the statutes and documents of sister states, as well as those of the Federal Government.

The first special acquisition—a novelty outside the book category—was more properly a museum item: an orrery. The 1820 Legislature voted the sum of $1,000 with which to "purchase of Theodore Newell

The first State Capitol, on whose second floor the State Library began its career in a single room. The building was designed by Philip Hooker and was occupied in 1809. A corner of the new Capitol under construction appears behind it, at left.

one of his newly invented astronomical machines." Considering that the specified annual appropriation for additions to the library was only $500, this was a tidy amount, indeed.

An orrery was a small planetarium, showing the positions and motions of the planets by balls moved by wheelwork. Orreries had been around, in some variety, for many years, hence were not invented by Theodore Newell; but he had devised a superior mechanical drive. Newell was a Vermont farmer who had lost the use of his legs in an accident, and consequently took up astronomy as a hobby. The machine he developed was spoken of in scientific circles as the "Newellian sphere," and he named it a "heliogeastrum." It was supported by a framework of three large circles of mahogany, intersecting one another, which were six feet in diameter. There is reason to believe that the "heliogeastrum" bought for the State Library was the only one Newell managed to sell. In 1825, he was seeking financial backing from a group of sponsors in Connecticut, but the machine apparently never was produced commercially. It proved inaccurate, as compared to others.

John Cook's fortunes improved further when, in 1820, an Apprentices' Library was founded in Albany and he was engaged as its librarian, in addition to his other activities. The idea of apprentices' libraries was spawned in England by the Industrial Revolution, and was spreading in America. These were intended mainly to benefit teen-age apprentices in the mechanical trades. Cook acknowledged the gift of 30 volumes for the Albany Apprentices' Library from Governor Clinton, and of another 19 volumes from Chancellor Kent.

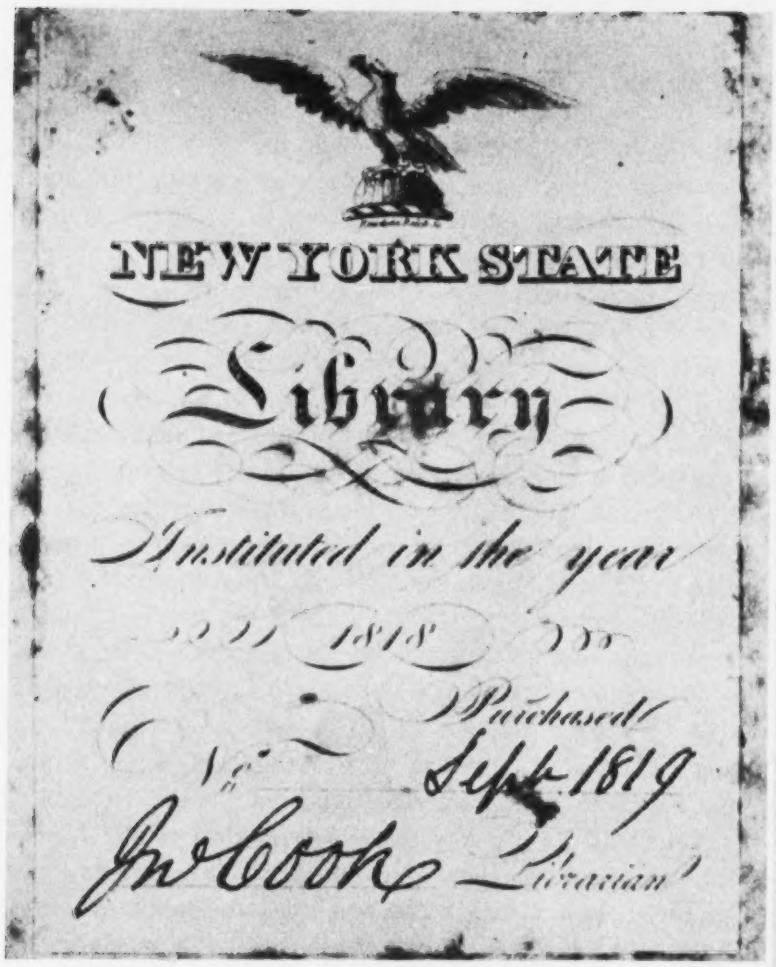
A collateral problem for the State Library was sensed early by John Cook: that it would have to take on bookbinding as a function. Finding that some acquisitions were unbound, he suggested to the Board of Trustees "the propriety of an application to the Legislature for the passage of a law requiring the librarian to have such books bound as the trustees may from time to time deem proper, and making an appropriation for the payment thereof." It would be some time before the Legislature saw the "propriety" thereof.

In September 1822, after three seasons of operation, Cook reported that the State Library owned 1,406 volumes and 369 pamphlets, and added:

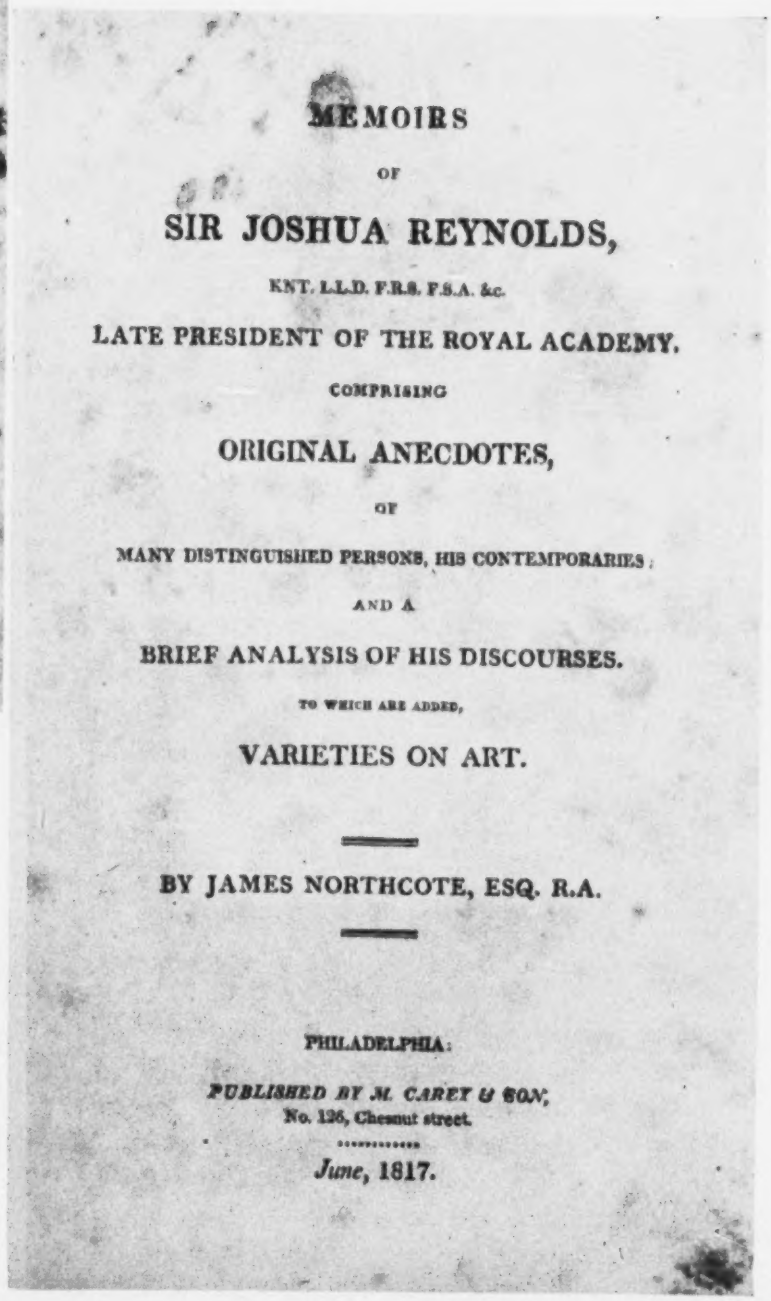
"The librarian states with pride and satisfaction the sentiments of foreigners and strangers from our sister states, who have visited this institution since its establishment; those who have examined the catalogue and books expressed the highest gratification in meeting so judicious a selection, and an universal regret that the appropriation had not been more liberal, as it was considered by all that the establishment of a public library by a nation was one of its greatest and most useful ornaments."

At the same time, the first pinch for space was being felt. The present room, Cook said, was already filled with cases. He hinted that the Legislature be asked to order a wall knocked out, allowing the library to expand into the adjoining room "now employed as a jury room and a depository for lumber."

This was the last report John Cook would make.



One of the first books placed on the shelves of the State Library was the Memoirs of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the 18th Century English portrait painter, acquired in 1819. The bookplate affixed inside the cover was personally signed by the librarian, John Cook, as he did for all books in the library. About 1838, someone borrowed the book and forgot to return it. After 129 years, it turned up in a "carload" of old books donated to the Beekman Reading Center of Green Haven, in Dutchess County. Mrs. Mary Hoag, the librarian, spotted the bookplate and sent it to the State Library. The Reynolds Memoirs, in consequence, is the only book from the early catalog known to be still in existence.



MEMOIRS

OF

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,

KNT. LL.D. F.R.S. F.S.A. &c.

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE ROYAL ACADEMY.

COMPRISING

ORIGINAL ANECDOTES,

OF

MANY DISTINGUISHED PERSONS, HIS CONTEMPORARIES;

AND A

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF HIS DISCOURSES.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

VARIETIES ON ART.

BY JAMES NORTHCOTE, ESQ. R.A.

PHILADELPHIA:

PUBLISHED BY M. CAREY & SON,
No. 126, Chesnut street.

June, 1817.

2. Books and Politics

The rosy glow in which DeWitt Clinton entered upon his first term soon began to fade under the wily manipulations of Martin Van Buren. The "Red Fox" of Kinderhook was busily welding together the formidable apparatus upon which Thurlow Weed was later to pin the label, Albany Regency. By 1822, this model for future political machines was so powerful in the statehouse that Clinton simply withdrew from seeking a third nomination. The Van Burenite Bucktails installed Supreme Court Judge Joseph G. Yates as Governor.

It was not the new Governor, however, but death which removed John Cook as state librarian. At the age of 59, he expired suddenly on August 21, 1823. His widow, Cornelia, continued the reading room.

In choosing a successor to Cook, the Regency-dominated trustees set a precedent for a quarter-century to come. They named a person with no visible credentials for being a librarian. The position of State librarian became a political plum, and thereafter the pay was increased, step by step, to $700.

The second State librarian bore the pungent name of Calvin Pepper. The city directory identified him as an "attorney and counselor", and he did not alter the listing to "State librarian" (as Cook had done) during the six years he held the office. There was some sense, at least, in the choice of an attorney, as an important function of the library was to assist the lawmakers and the courts.

Pepper was only 27 years old when he took the post. One presumes him to have been a diligent young chap, as he had computed the census of Albany in 1820, arriving at a total of 10,541. Little can be deduced of his legal career, beyond the fact that he once defended a man charged with violating an ordinance against allowing pigs to roam in the streets. Some time after he ceased to be librarian, he turned up as clerk of the Albany County Board of Supervisors.

It would seem that Calvin Pepper was at least a good enough librarian to satisfy DeWitt Clinton, since Clinton made a comeback as Governor and did not eliminate him. The membership of the library's board of trustees had been modified in the meantime to consist of the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Secretary of State, Comptroller, and Attorney-General.

Van Buren, after getting the Regency solidly entrenched, had himself appointed as United States Senator. His cohorts undermined Clinton until he was "much in the condition of a pastor without a congregation." Not content with elbowing him out of the governorship, the Regency took an arrogant further step which was a classic blunder. It forced an act through the Legislature removing him as head of the Canal Board just when the Erie Canal was nearing completion. This deed of obvious injustice was a bombshell to the canal-conscious populace. Angry citizens stormed the Albany Capitol to protest, and mass meetings sprang up all over the State. The outcome was that Clinton was virtually drafted to run again for Governor in 1824, and he won a landslide victory. It was a triumphal procession when Governor Clinton rode the *Seneca Chief* the length of the Erie Canal in October 1825, and then down the Hudson to empty a cask of Lake Erie water into New York Harbor.

The stringent library rules had been relaxed enough to allow legislators to take books out. It then became a duty of the State librarian to report the status of such loans to the Legislature at the end of sessions. We find Calvin Pepper assuring the Speaker of the Assembly: "I certify that each and every member has returned all books by him received this session from said library, or have settled with the Comptroller therefor, and that nothing is due for fines or for forfeitures."

In case a legislator defaulted on returning a book, "he shall be held responsible for its value," said the bylaw. "And if it belongs to a set of volumes, for the value of the set, unless he shall supply the chasm."

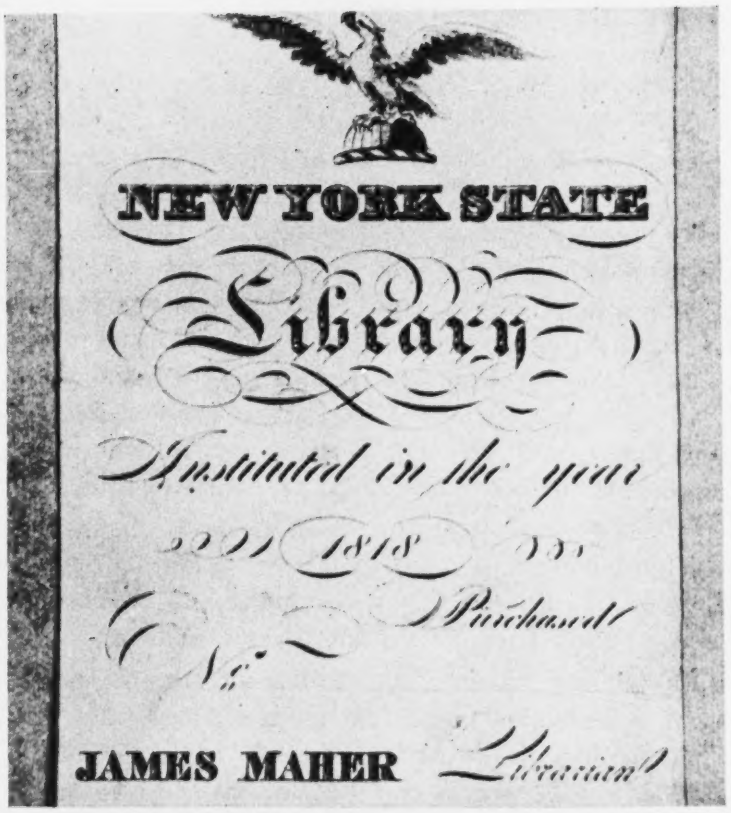
With Clinton back, prospects looked up anew for the State Library. Hardly had he taken his renewed oath when the 1825 session set up a joint legislative committee to examine the library. As a result of the committee's report, an act of that year added $1,000 to the regular library appropriation, directed that $300 be drawn each year from Court of Chancery fees, and required that there be appended to each annual report "a true and perfect catalogue of all the books, maps and charts then remaining within and belonging to said library." Again in 1827, a special appropriation of $1,000 was made for "gradual enlargement," and the regular annual appropriation was increased to $1,000.

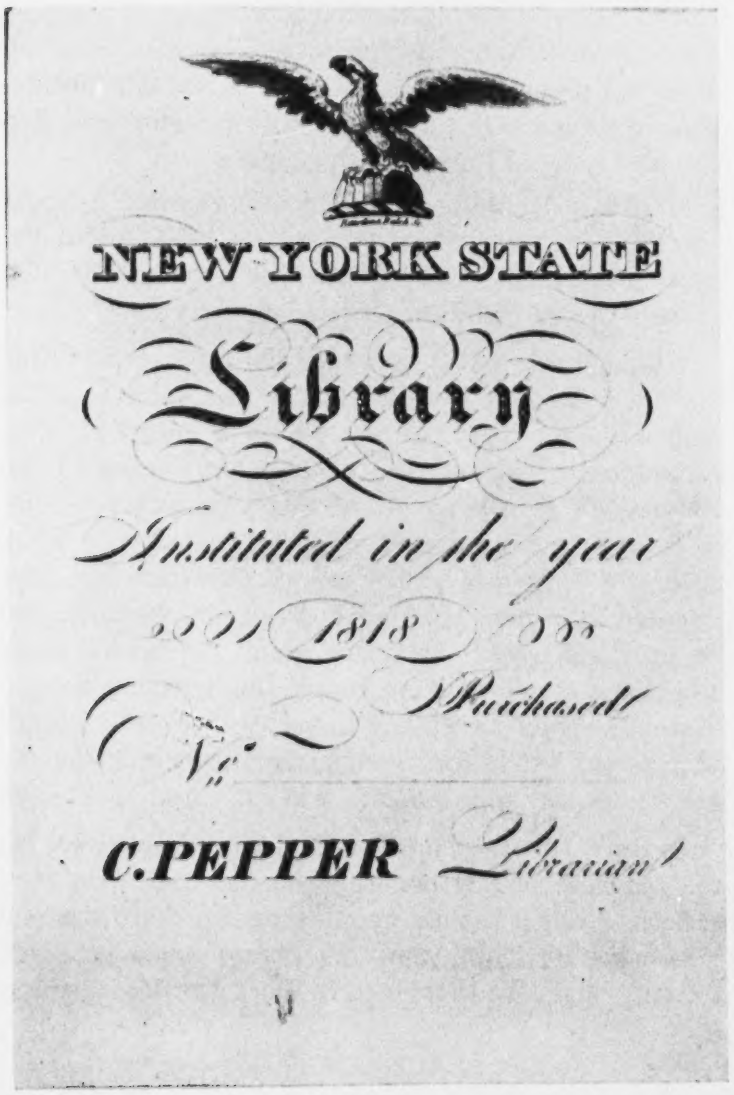
In the early years, most of the library funds went for the purchase of law books, while the "miscellaneous" collection relied heavily upon "generous donations and gifts." By its tenth year, the library contained such recently published titles as Wordsworth's Poetical

Works, Sir Walter Scott's Miscellaneous Prose Works, and Washington Irving's *Conquest of Grenada.* John Cook's proposal of expanding by battering down a partition was acted upon, and readers found more elbowroom.

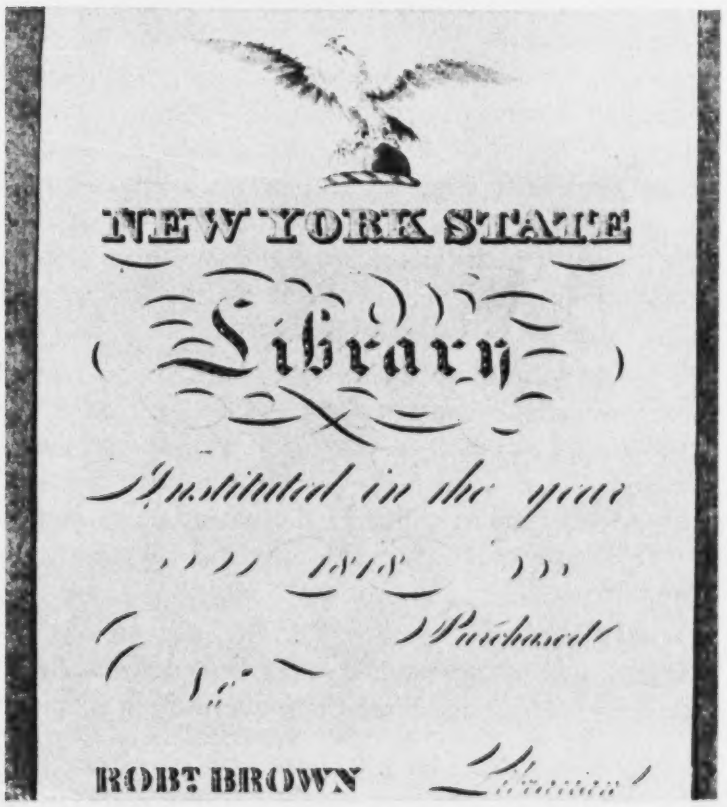
Only by keeping an eye trained on the contemporary political drama is it possible to comprehend the turnover in State librarians up until the mid-century.

Clinton was reelected in 1826 and enjoyed a season of relative peace from political strife amid his books and art at the Pearl Street mansion. On February 11, 1828, after a busy day at the Capitol, he went home, dined, relaxed in his library, and died in his chair of a heart attack. The vacancy gave Van Buren an opening to put through his scheme of becoming Governor just long enough to await his promised appointment as Secretary of State by President Andrew Jackson. He induced Judge Enos T. Throop to be his Lieutenant-Governor with the secret understanding that he would shortly inherit the top office. During the mere 70 days which Van Buren served as Governor, he made a spoils system housecleaning of Albany's Capitol Hill.





The immediate successors of Cook as State librarian did not have to exert themselves by signing the bookplates for all books added. Their names were printed on the plates. From the library's present collection of bookplates, here are three samples with the names of librarians who were out-and-out political appointees: Calvin Pepper, James Maher, and Robert Brown.



In that sweep, Calvin Pepper was ousted as State librarian and James Maher came in. No doubt Maher had earned the job, as he was the Regency's strongman of the Fourth Ward, able to deliver its vote at will. The Fourth was the waterfront ward of Albany's South End, tough and rowdy. It was populated mainly by rivermen, canallers, dockers, and Irish laborers. In elections, a rule-of-thumb was: "As goes the Fourth Ward so goes the State." Maher had no financial need of the library job: he owned a thriving wholesale-and-retail grocery business. Thus the appointment can be viewed as nothing less than a political reward.

James Maher was an Irish immigrant who landed at Albany in 1797, at the age of thirteen. By the outbreak of the War of 1812 he was already prospering as a merchant. For many Irish-Americans, the opportunity to fight the British was irresistible. Maher organized a company of them, the Albany Volunteers, better known as the Irish Greens. Under General Stephen van Rensselaer, they saw action in the first campaign on the Niagara Frontier, then were transferred to Sacket's Harbor.

From Sacket's Harbor, Maher's Irish Greens made part of the force which in 1813 sailed across Lake Ontario for the raid on York, the capital of Upper Canada. Although the burning of the Parliament buildings, including the government library, was ascribed to sailors, the pillaging of the town library and homes was the work of soldiery. So far as known, that was the nearest James Maher came to any library experience before Governor Van Buren made him State librarian.

After a year's service, Maher was welcomed back to Albany as "the gallant captain of the Irish Greens," and resumed his grocery business, at the same time being local paymaster for troops. In the same Jacksonian sweep that made Van Buren Governor (ergo Secretary of State), Maher was elected to the Albany Common Council from his obedient Fourth Ward; and kept being reelected during most of his term as State librarian.

Soon after becoming librarian, Maher had a new neighbor on Green Street with whom he became friendly. This was a large, warm-hearted, magnetic man named Thurlow Weed. Though on opposite sides of the political fence, these two respected one another's qualities, Maher not dreaming that his neighbor would one day bring his career as a librarian to an abrupt end.

Thurlow Weed, by trade a printer, was publisher of a newspaper in Rochester when elected to the Assembly. The Anti-Masonic Party had flared up in Western New York, in the wake of the abduction and disappearance of William Morgan, and Weed sensed its political possibilities. In 1830, Anti-Masonic leaders financed Weed to start a newspaper in Albany as the party's mouthpiece. Thus was born the *Albany Evening Journal,* later to be the leading organ of the Whig Party, of which Weed became the so-called "Dictator." In his autobiography, Weed left an entertaining sketch of Maher as he was during his term as State librarian:

> The scene of most exciting action in our early struggle with the Regency was the fourth ward of the city of Albany. That ward was the residence of Captain James Maher, a popular, adroit, and clear-headed Democratic leader, and myself, who were respectively charged with the organization and conduct of the elections, then occupying three days. I had known Captain Maher in command of a company of 'Irish Greens' at Sackett's [sic] Harbor in 1813. Though politically opposed, a warm personal friendship existed between us, a circumstance which, in the most exciting fourth ward elections, on more than one occasion prevented violent outbreaks. There was a large number of canal and river men always drifting about the poll of the fourth ward, whose votes gave the ward to the party that succeeded in obtaining them. For many years, the Regency, physically too strong for us, carried the ward by a decisive majority. That physical superiority not only gave them 'the drift-wood' as it was called, but by violence and intimidation kept quiet and infirm Whig electors from the polls. To obviate this difficulty, it became necessary to meet force by force. I, therefore, in 1835, organized a force, avowedly to preserve order, and enable all peaceable electors to reach the ballot-boxes. I apprised Captain Maher of our intention to protect our electors, 'peaceably if we could, forcibly if we must.' He approved of this determination, and endeavored to induce his hard-fisted men to act with ours in preserving order. But that was impossible . . . The first day of the election closed auspiciously. This so much exasperated our opponents, that a large number of them appeared the next morning with concealed weapons, and bent upon mischief. Captain Maher, however, was enabled to control his followers, and the second day passed off quietly. But on the third and last day, an hour or two after the polls opened there was a violent outbreak, in which twenty or thirty men with clubs were engaged . . . That election resulted in a handsome Whig gain. Our physical force was therefore maintained and augmented, and in 1837, after a desperate struggle, we carried the ward, as we did the State.

As for Maher's performance as librarian, we can only judge from the more prosaic annual reports of the trustees, who said, for instance, in January, 1833:

"The Trustees have the satisfaction to be able to continue the assurance that the duties of the Librarian are faithfully performed; the books are kept in as perfect a state of arrangement as the rooms will permit, and in as perfect a state of preservation as any vigilance can secure; and all reasonable attention is paid to the comfort and convenience of those who have occasion to visit the library."

Only once did Martin Van Buren sign his name to a report as chairman of the library's board of trustees, in January 1829. At the same session of the Legislature to which it was submitted, another joint legislative committee was created to "examine into the condition and management of the state library." In poking around, it made the discovery that the library had used up 202½ pounds of candles during the past year, and that they had cost the taxpayers $66.91. The committee thought that "less than half of the sum which has been paid for stationary and candles will be more than sufficient to supply these articles, so far as may be necessary." For the first time the library was given a cut in budgetary allowance. A statute was adopted limiting its expenditure for "stationary and candles" to $50 in a year. What effect this enactment may have had upon the eyesight of library patrons does not appear in the record, but perhaps James Maher was a willing collaborator in the economy move. The trustees found one year later that the expense for stationary and candles combined had actually been held down to $23.59, and said: "This has been effected in a considerable degree by the personal attention, and commendable care and economy of the librarian: and the trustees beg leave to suggest the justice of making an addition to his compensation."

Accordingly the Legislature boosted the salary of State librarian from $300 to $500 per annum, which more than took care of the saving he had effected in candles. Two years later the salary was increased again, to $700. The reason for the second increase is easy to fathom: an act was passed simultaneously to keep the library open daily, except Sunday, the year round. This step, the trustees judged, "greatly increased the advantages which the public derive from that institution."

The board of trustees had been modified in 1824 to include, in addition to the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, the Secretary of State, the Comptroller, and the Attorney General. By 1830, however, the latter three officials were acting for the entire board. In 1835, they respectfully invited "the attention of the Legislature to the rooms in which the library is kept, which are too small for the convenient arrangement of the books, maps and charts, and the accommodation of those who use them." The Legislature took due note, and at that point in history a separation took place between the law library and the "miscellaneous department." The division was quite emphatic: the two sections were placed on opposite sides of the Capitol. While the law library spread out in the joined rooms on the north side of the second floor, the "miscellaneous department" moved across the way into an apartment which was diverted from other uses to receive it.

Also in 1835 occurs the first record of a negotiation for an international exchange of books. A legislative resolution authorized the trustees to transmit "certain laws, records and documents to the Commissioners of Public Records of Great Britain and Ireland." An act was passed to pay the expenses of carrying this out. The Record Commissioners of the United Kingdom already had donated to the State Library a number of their "valuable publications," and New York State was now about to reciprocate with duplicate copies of its Session Laws and Legislative Documents. The first consignment was almost ready to put on a boat for New York that autumn when the Hudson River froze over ahead of schedule. The shipment to the British Consul, for forwarding to England, had to await the breakup of the ice in 1836.

Meanwhile, "Little Van" had become Andrew Jackson's Vice-President, and from that springboard succeeded him in the White House. At Albany, Throop proved a weak vessel and William L. Marcy, one of Van Buren's ablest lieutenants, was substituted for him as Governor in spite of his famous gaffe that he saw "nothing wrong in the rule that to the victors belong the spoils of the enemy." Marcy served three two-year terms, had his name pinned to the highest peak in the Adirondacks, and retained Maher as State librarian.

Van Buren inherited an economic catastrophe, the Panic of 1837, and the fortunes of the Whig Party were buoyant on its angry waves. That was the year in which the Whigs cracked the Fourth Ward and seized control of Albany's City Hall. To his mortification, Maher was whipped in the ward he had so long held in the palm of his hand. The Whig-dominated Common Council created a new position, that of city auditor, to take care of one of that party's own henchmen, Robert Brown. The Democratic paper, the *Argus,* cried loudly that the job was a "sinecure" and alleged that Brown drew $700 a year "for doing nothing." He was also a deputy sheriff, and by trade a merchant tailor, junior partner in the Albany firm of James Brown & Son.

Weed had long been grooming his man from Auburn, William H. Seward, for Governor, and now the time was at hand. Seward defeated Marcy in the election of 1838, and Thurlow Weed was the power behind the throne in Albany— the "Dictator." He began paying

the Regency off in its own coin. As soon as Seward was in the Executive Chamber, at the start of 1839, there was "hardly a day in which the Governor and Mr. Weed did not meet."

The *Argus* (which persisted in referring to the Whigs as "federalists") presently reported: "Among the first acts of the new federal state officers is the removal of James Maher as State Librarian, and the appointment of Robert Brown in his place." That was the opening gun in a lively exchange of newspaper brickbats between the *Argus* and the *Evening Journal* over the change in State librarians. For the names of the papers could be substituted those of their editors: Edwin Croswell, who was also State printer and a figure in the Albany Regency; and Thurlow Weed, who had an enormous woodcut of an eagle made, with wings outspread, and splashed it across his pages at every Whig victory.

The *Argus* branded Robert Brown as "one of the greatest 'pot house brawlers and political blackguards' in the federal ranks." It referred back to the creation of the "sinecure" of city auditor for Brown's benefit, calling it a "disgraceful transaction . . . for a corrupt party purpose." It reviewed at some length the career of James Maher, who had been "actuated by the noblest love of country" and "left the comforts of an affluent home" to serve in the War of 1812. It charged that the ground of Whig opposition to Maher in a prior Fourth Ward election had been "not that he was not a respectable citizen, of unimpeachable honor and morality," but that "he was a Catholic." Now he was removed "by the partizans who profess so much repugnance to the doctrine of the 'spoils'." The outraged editor continued: "As a uniform republican, as an officer of the late war, as an upright and esteemed citizen, and as the intelligent and disinterested friend of his countrymen, our adopted citizens, it was not to be expected that he would be retained a moment longer than his successor could be designated by the Dictator of the *Evening Journal.*"

Through the columns of the *Evening Journal,* Thurlow Weed retorted:

"The *Argus* indulges this morning in a long whine about the appointment of State Librarian. Mr. Maher, who has held the office for many years, is a worthy citizen and has discharged his duties well. He obtained and enjoyed the situation as a reward for political services. He has brought, for 12 years, more strength to the Polls for the Regency Ticket, than any other man. His motto is that to the 'Victor belong the Spoils.'

"In the selection of Mr. Brown as the successor of Mr. Maher, the Trustees of the Capitol have secured the services of an excellent officer. He is, like Mr. Maher, well qualified for Librarian, and like Mr. Maher, in another respect, Mr. Brown is an active, indefatigable politician."

The duel in type continued. The *Argus* noted that the *Evening Journal* had carried a brief notice "which must serve, we presume, in the absence of any thing better, as an attempted vindication of the personal standing and character of Brown. The editor of the E. J. could not allow his *particular friend* to pass, under the expositions of his pretensions to the library appointment over the heads of several other 'Whig' candidates, whose respectability and qualifications come in strong contrast with the rewarded favorite, without at least the show of saying something. But he cautiously avoids the subject of the creation of an office as a reward for A DISAPPOINTED PARTY BRAWLER" (this last in reference to the city auditor post). The *Argus* inquired whether the people would be content "to see their money thrown away to reward such a man as Brown with office, and with the means of attending not to the public business, but to his party and personal schemes?"

In reply to this round, Thurlow Weed fired back:

"The reiterated assertions of the State Printer, that Robert Brown, the Librarian, is a 'pot house brawler and political blackguard', are entirely destitute of the semblance of truth. We said a few days since, that Mr. Brown, in respect to reputation, might challenge comparison with Croswell. This was but equivocal praise. We now say that Robert Brown sustains not merely a fair, but a blameless character. His integrity is unquestioned. His habits are correct—his morals pure. He is no 'brawler' and no frequenter of 'pot-houses.' His time is given to business and study. The money he earns is devoted to the support of his aged and infirm Parents. For the duties of Librarian he is peculiarly well qualified: possessing as he does, a familiar acquaintance with Books, and a mind well stored with historical knowledge and classical literature."

Despite all the controversy in the press, Brown remained as State librarian as long as the Whigs were in power. Seward reasserted the prerogative of the Governor to act as chairman of the board of trustees of the State Library, and signed his name to the report made in January, 1840, which said: "The Trustees cannot close this report without respectfully calling the attention of the Legislature to the very inadequate provision now made by law for increasing the State Library. That provision consists of the annual appropriation of $1,000 from the treasury, and of $300 annually from the common fund of the Court of Chancery. . . . This sum scarcely enables the Trustees to keep pace with the current reports of cases decided, with the new law

books published, and with the scientific and literary works which are constantly issuing from the press, and which are usually found in private libraries of any pretensions."

Robert Brown, the tailor's son, may not have been the best possible choice for librarian; but there is evidence that Seward gave more serious attention to the State Library than any Governor since Clinton. The 1840 Legislature named another joint committee on the library, which examined it and was "much gratified to witness the decided improvement manifested in the appearance of the same." The committee increased the annual allotment for candles and stationery from $50 to $75. It also felt that "more care should be taken in the arrangement of the books on the shelves." The system then in use was alphabetical, and if a title began with "The," the book was cataloged under the "T's." Seward's library committee suggested that "The Life of Washington" should be placed under the letter "W," and "The Pamphleteer" under the letter "P." The proper arrangement of the catalog was a problem which would continue to recur, and which would not be resolved until much later in the century.

3. Regents Take the Reins

The intellectual stature of custodians of the State Library was heightened somewhat with the appointment of William Cassidy. Henry James (the elder), an Albany contemporary, remarked that he was the best-read man of his time in the French ballads. Cassidy seems to have been the first college graduate to be State librarian. Union College gave him a diploma with honors in 1833, when he was 18. Languages came easy to him, and he retained a fondness for French literature in the original version.

Grandson of an Irish immigrant, William Cassidy was the son of a butcher shop proprietor who wished him to be a lawyer. For that reason he studied law in the Albany office of John Van Buren, the President's son; but, though admitted to the bar, he never practiced. His real talent was a facile and witty pen. While reading law, he contributed caustic pieces to a couple of radical local periodicals, the *Plaindealer* and the *Rough Hewer,* and these caught the eye of John Van Buren.

In the 1841 election the Democrats regained control of the Legislature. Three of the five-member board of trustees of the State Library now were Democratic, and they outvoted Governor Seward and his Lieutenant Governor, to remove Robert Brown, the Whig. In his stead, at the behest of the Van Buren wing of their party, they placed William Cassidy.

The Democrats were heading into their disastrous schism and Cassidy was caught up in it. Martin Van Buren, after a single term as President, was defeated for reelection, more by the drum-beating tactics of Thurlow Weed than by William Henry Harrison. Licking his wounds at Kinderhook, Van Buren plotted a return in 1844, but stubbed his toe by speaking out against the annexation of Texas. The two Van Burens were leaders of the Radical faction of the party, soon to be dubbed the Barnburners (for the Dutch farmer who burned down his barn to get rid of the rats). The Conservative wing (alias Hunkers) took orders from Edwin Croswell, editor of the *Albany Argus.* The two factions collaborated long enough to elect William C. Bouck as Governor in 1842, then rapidly diverged.

A new paper, the *Atlas,* was obscurely born in Albany in 1841. Shortly after becoming librarian, Cassidy, with his itch to write, joined James M. French in the management of the *Atlas.* He scribed editorials which were cleverly satirical and studded with vigorous phrases. French was married to John Van Buren's sister, and Van Buren admired Cassidy's style. The Van Burens, father and son—now at cross-purposes with Croswell and the *Argus*—attached the *Atlas* to their cause, and Cassidy began burning barns with delight. He duelled with the *Argus* so belligerently that ultimately Croswell sued him for libel and won $500 damages. He also feuded with Thurlow Weed, but at his death the *Evening Journal* termed him "undoubtedly the ablest Democratic editor in the country." Such a man, even if he did read French ballads, could hardly have devoted much time to his library work.

During the two years Cassidy was librarian, the political caldron was hot. The Anti-Rent Wars, a farmers' rebellion against the manorial privileges of the Van Rensselaer family, broke out under Seward and continued under Bouck. On the national scene, war with England was feared over the Oregon boundary issue; war with Mexico threatened over Texas. John Charles Fremont was exploring the Rockies. Manifest Destiny was in the air, and the Mormons were on the move.

After the legislative committee on the library reported in 1840, the Legislature decided that such a joint library committee should be "raised" annually, during the first week of each session, "to examine into the state and condition of the library and to report such amendments and additions to the same as they may deem judicious." Patently someone in the Seward administration was thinking that there should be better ways of running a library.

By chance and luck, this library was beginning to make a few acquisitions of unusual worth, and agents represented it in the book-marts of London and Holland. The law division boasted of owning the three-volume *Codex Theodosianus,* printed at Lyons in 1665. The 1841 report asserted: "The Trustees have been particularly desirous to obtain the best works on Civil Engineering, on Mineralogy and Geology, and those which relate to statistics."

The interest in mineralogy and geology may have been related to the fact that the State itself was issuing, in installments, a significant and pioneering work in the field of science. The State Library became a prime repository of this publication as successive volumes appeared, and it made a first-rate parcel for exchange with other states. This was the *Natural History of New York,* the outgrowth of the Natural History Survey

launched by the Legislature in 1836. The initial Geological Reports had been added, with a touch of fanfare, to the library shelves in 1838.

There was something of even greater future value—just how precious nobody at the time realized—which had been arriving volume by volume: John James Audubon's *Birds of America.* Today the huge leather-bound volumes of Audubon's bird paintings, four to a set (he called them double elephant folios) are rated one of America's priceless art treasures. The total number of sets printed probably did not exceed 190 or 200. A London engraver, Robert Havell, Jr., teamed up with Audubon to make the aquatint engravings. To finance this supreme project of his life, Audubon traveled about, first in Europe, later in his own country, signing up advance subscribers at $1,000 a set. The New York Legislature was seventh on his list of American subscribers.

In the Laws of 1833 occurs this Section: "The trustees of the state library are directed to purchase and deposit in the library, a copy of Audubon's Ornithology, and the sum necessary to purchase said work shall be paid by the treasurer on the warrant of the controller." The library trustees in 1837 made note of the fact that "the third volume of Audubon's Ornithology has been received, for which the sum of $200 has been paid from the State treasury." Then in 1840 the board, with Governor Seward as chairman, reported: "The fourth and last volume of Audubon's Ornithology has been purchased and placed in the library."

Evidently the Audubon bird paintings were an exceedingly popular feature of the State Library, because they took some hard usage. Five years after the set had been completed, the trustees (by then the Regents) had this to say of what was probably the library's choicest possession:

"The splendid work of Audubon on the Birds of America was found to be in an extremely dilapidated state, the plates torn and injured and the binding out of order. The venerable author [he was then age 59], on his visit to this city, during the summer, to exhibit his equally beautiful work on the Quadrupeds of America, supposed that it could be repaired at a small expense, and kindly offered to superintend the same. But it was found that to restore the work to anything like its original condition, would require an outlay of two hundred dollars, and it was therefore ordered to be returned. The first volume, containing one hundred plates, and the most out of order, has been repaired in this city, by attaching muslin to the back of the respective plates and guarding their edges. With this protection, it may, we hope, be preserved from further injury."

At the onset of 1842, as Cassidy came in, the Legislature "raised" its next joint library committee. For some reason undisclosed, that particular year's committee did a far more concientious job of studying the State Library than any which had gone before. It was that committee which first broached the idea that the Board of Regents, governing body of The University of the State of New York, might make appropriate trustees for the State Library, in place of the ex officio political trustees. It was, after all, more in their line of work. Moreover, the Regents were not political officeholders.

Noting that the library had picked up markedly since 1840, the committee observed:

"This library was heretofore a disgrace to the State, and its condition such as made any gentleman conversant with the public libraries in Europe, or even in this country, ashamed to call the attention of strangers to its existence."

The committee's first and most pointed suggestion was a change in "supervision and control." The inquiring legislators thought that the library "should be under the care and supervision of gentlemen who have not only literary qualifications and taste and even love for books, but time to attend to its duties." The report went on:

> It is believed it would be more appropriate, as well as more beneficial to the interests of the library, to commit its charge either to the officers who were its original trustees under the act of April 21, 1818, being the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Chancellor and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; or to the Regents of the University. The last, in the judgment of the committee, would form the most suitable board for the purpose. Their duties being entirely confined to literary objects, fit them peculiarly well for the discharge of those duties, and their frequent sessions in the city of Albany will enable them to make frequent visits of inspection to the library.

Because of the library's increase in importance and value ("it is now for its size one of the best collections of books in the country"), the committee felt that the State librarian should also be selected "with reference to his taste and knowledge of books." The report stated:

> If a suitable person, he would greatly relieve the trustees and the joint library committee in the performance of their duties, and he would be enabled, for his constant attendance and supervision of the library, to make from time to time suggestions of much value to its interests, advancement and proper regulation. He should be required to be constant in his personal attendance upon the library, and should not be

> permitted to leave the performance of his duties in the hands of others, without the consent of the trustees; he should be required to see that the books are restored to their proper places upon the shelves at least once in each day.

The committee thought it would be "unjust" to continue holding the librarian responsible for books lost, so long as the books were on open shelves and the library open to all comers. Therefore it recommended glass doors for all book cases, with lock and key. This practice was later tried out on a small scale.

The recommendation for full-time attendance of the State librarian did not affect William Cassidy. He went blithely about his editorial writing for the *Atlas,* and, before he was out of the library, had even been proposed for State printer.

The suggestion that the Regents would make appropriate library trustees gained ground in high places. Finally, on May 4, 1844, the Legislature passed an act whose wording began:

"The Regents of the University of the State of New York are hereby constituted and shall continue the Trustees of the State Library." (There were, at the time, 22 Regents and three ex officio members of the Board—making 25 trustees in all).

The current trustees were directed by the act to surrender immediately to the secretary of the Regents all remaining sums; and to turn over "all books, documents, vouchers and papers in their custody."

The new trustees were given the power "to remove the librarian at any time when they shall deem it expedient," and to select a new librarian. Such librarian, the statute specified, "shall be constant in his personal attendance upon the library, during the hours it shall be directed to be kept open." The next librarian was authorized to hire an assistant, and the total salary of librarian and assistant combined was set at $825. By law, the library was henceforth to be kept open each day of the year, Sundays excepted. The prior law to that effect had been rescinded in 1840, and the legislative library committee had since said: "This repeal was made without sufficient advisement."

It is hardly likely that the Board of Regents was caught by surprise, but it was in adjournment, *sine die,* when the bill was passed. A special meeting as trustees of the library was held on May 16, presided over by Chancellor Peter Wendell. The minutes show that the Regents interpreted it as the "spirit of the act" that one of their first duties was the appointment of a new State librarian.

The man chosen to supplant Cassidy was an Albany attorney, John L. Tillinghast. It was a close vote. Fifteen Regents were at the meeting, and their ballot was split eight to seven, according to Weed's *Evening Journal,* which claimed inside information. Political influence was not wholly lacking in the Board of Regents, it appears.

While Tillinghast put into effect the first reforms made under Regents administration, he is just about the "forgotten man" of State librarians. Personal information about him is almost nonexistent in the records, though he served four years. The guess is unavoidable that he was placed in the job as a temporary expedient while the Regents looked about for a person uniquely qualified "with reference to his taste and knowledge of books," as the library committee had hoped.

The Whigs assumed the role of amused bystanders to this shift in librarians. The *Evening Journal* said:

"Mr. Cassidy was removed to pay off the *Atlas* 'Clique' for some of the 'first rate notices' they have bestowed upon the *Argus* and the Bouck administration during the past twelvemonth. It is a 'family quarrel' with which we have no desire to meddle. But we must express our sincere gratification at the appointment of our estimable fellow citizen, James Kane, to the post of assistant librarian. This selection is exceedingly creditable to the Regents, and will give great and general satisfaction to our citizens."

Cassidy's own paper, the *Atlas,* reported his dismissal with a dash of vinegar, openly implying that the vote of the Board of Regents had been along political lines. One cannot avoid the impression that Cassidy himself wrote the following paragraph:

"The office of librarian is not a very lucrative appointment, but it was an honorable one, and rendered doubly so by being received at the hands of the distinguished men who conferred it. During the two years of his incumbency, the editor of this paper retained the confidence of these men. This at least is gratifying: nor is a glance at the 'metes and bounds' which define his official career without something of pleasurable contemplation. It commenced under the dissenting votes of Messrs. Seward and Bradish and closed under the proscriptive suffrages of Messrs. Bouck and [Daniel S.] Dickinson [Lieutenant Governor]. The hostility of all these gentlemen was to the opinions of the incumbent to opinions which have undergone no change but were the same when they first encountered Whig hostility as when they finally met with conservative proscription."

Actual superintendence over the Library was vested in a committee of seven Regents. They "inherited" approximately 10,000 volumes. The next thing the Regents did as trustees was to order a thorough inventory of the books. The inventory showed 311 books

missing, and said that the Trustees were "without the power of identifying them, it being understood that on the later purchases no mark or stamp was placed indicating that they were the property of the State. It is certainly possible that the serious loss thus incurred may in most instances have originated from a want of due attention and care."

The Board felt that the books were "too much exposed," and ought to be "enclosed in glass or wire doors." An order was placed for a single case equipped with wire doors as an experiment.

The most valuable man to the library who was connected with the Board of Regents was its secretary, Dr. T. Romeyn Beck. Dr. Beck, principal of the Albany Academy, was also a physician of literary tastes, and had once been a professor in Albany Medical College. "His varied learning and extensive acquaintance with books, equalled by but few persons in this country," says a document, "have enabled him to render important services to the library."

The Regents liberalized the loan rules to permit attorneys to take law books to other rooms of the Capitol, also to extend borrowing privileges to heads of State departments in the city, and to people "engaged in historical or scientific investigations."

After one year in the capacity of trustees, the Regents expressed their convictions about the present and future of the library which was now in their charge, asserting "that the New York State Library is an institution highly honorable to the State, and capable of being rendered eminently useful."

4. Ventriloquist With a Vision

In a French village, around the year 1802, a six-year-old boy played hide-and-seek. His name was Nicholas Marie Alexandre Vattemare. In truncated form, this name one day was to be intimately involved with the fortunes of the New York State Library.

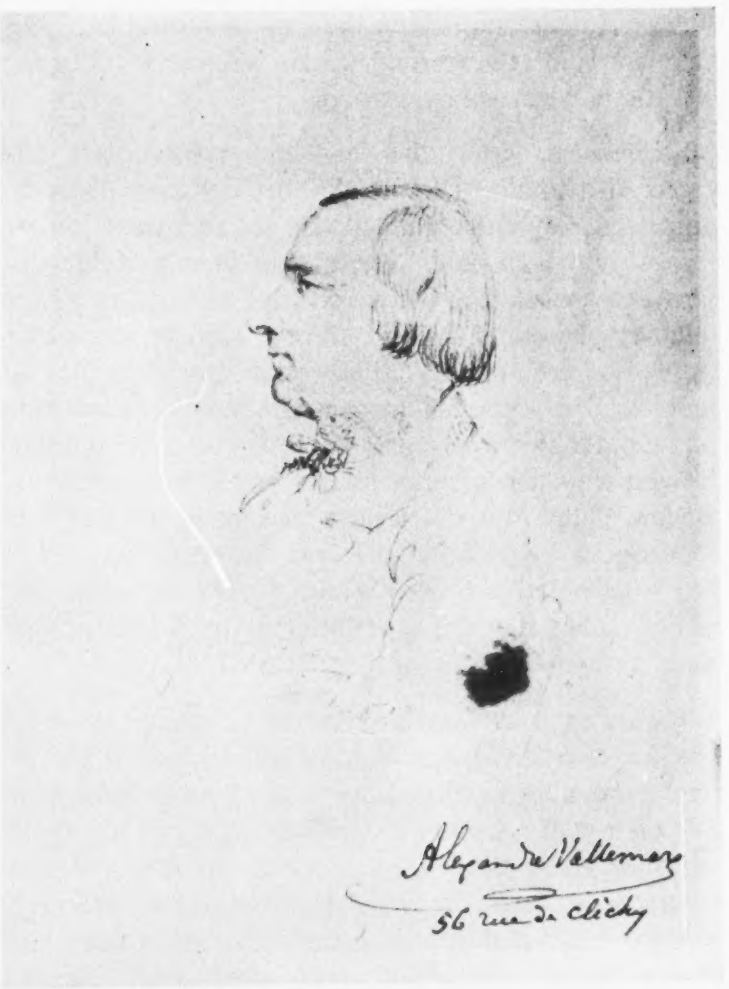
Having hidden himself too well, the boy gave his playmate a clue by calling out. To his surprise, his voice seemed not to be his own, but to come from somewhere else. Trying again, he discovered that he could shift his voice from place to place, so befuddling the searcher that he finally appealed to M. Vattemare, père, for help.

And so the boy was a born ventriloquist. From that time forth, little Alexandre had much fun and got into some mischief with his unique gift. Not only could he "throw" his voice; he could imitate other voices to perfection. Until the family grew bored with the trick, he mimicked the postman's cry at the door when no postman was there. He scared superstitious peasants out of their wits by carrying on dialogs with the "devil" lurking in a cupboard or chimney. Once he emptied a church whose steeple was known to be in danger of collapse, by causing a sepulchral voice to issue from the steeple: "Save your lives!"

Grown to a goodly youth at the end of Napoleon's career, Vattemare was apprenticed as a "surgical pupil" in Paris. While the fallen Emperor was in his first exile on Elba, Alexandre was assigned to care for 300 convalescent Prussian prisoners on their way home to Berlin. During the journey he kept his charges in such high spirits with his vocalistic capers that upon arriving in Germany they sang his praises.

The timing of this mission was awkward. Napoleon chose that moment to escape from Elba and the Hundred Days ensued. Stranded in Berlin and refusing to accept service in the Prussian army, Vattemare found himself a semi-prisoner. Urged on by some who had seen him perform, he beguiled the time with a trial tour of several German cities in an impromptu act. So successful was the tour that, after Waterloo, he embarked upon ventriloquism and impersonation as a career.

Soon the name of Monsieur Alexandre (his theatrical pseudonym) was celebrated all over Europe and money fattened his purse. The format of his act evolved into a large "supporting cast"—all played by himself, with lightning changes of costume. He depicted as many as 40 characters in a single hour. Sir Walter Scott, who had him as a guest at Abbotsford, inscribed a witty verse to him in which he spoke of "Alexandre & Co." The Mayor of Boston said he had "a despotic command over the accessories of speech." His face was melancholy in repose, but would suddenly light up with "exquisite mobility" to show mirth and other emotions. His gestures were energetic but graceful. Most of the crowned heads of Europe entertained him in return for his entertaining them. While talking with him, Czar Nicholas I of all the Russias, whose day had gone awry,



A famous French ventriloquist, Alexandre Vattemare, brought the New York State Library, along with other leading American libraries, into a network for the international exchange of books which he organized as a personal crusade. Thanks mainly to his effort, the young library obtained many rare European volumes. (From a drawing by William Walcutt in the New York Public Library).

was annoyed by an imaginary bluebottle fly that persisted in buzzing around his ears. In vain he slapped and swatted, and ended by clasping his head in his hands. When Monsieur Alexandre confessed that the fly was of his manufacture, the Czar burst out laughing. "The lords of the earth," spake Vattemare, "forgive everything when we amuse them."

Somewhere along the way the ventriloquist had absorbed a fondness for books. In each city where he played he sought out the library. It saddened him to observe how little public use most of them had. His distress grew when he discovered vast piles of duplicate volumes gathering dust in library storage rooms; in Munich alone were 200,000 such wasted copies of books and official documents. The notion seized him that these duplicates could be salvaged from oblivion through a system of inter-library and inter-country exchange. If this was not a new concept in the world of libraries, at least Vattemare was the man who put it into widespread practice. Within four years some two million volumes had been shifted around Europe and made accessible.

Thenceforward Monsieur Alexandre was a zealot for what he envisioned as a kind of millennium of the intellect. Possibly he craved a more durable fame than that of a clever entertainer. While pursuing his art of ventriloquy, he used it as a means to his new end. Wherever he went, reaping the profits of his immensely popular performances, he found time to advance his book-exchange plan, which, in his words, was "designed to give the intellectual treasures of the cultivated world the same dissemination and equalization which commerce has already given its material ones." His rapt slogan was "the great and blessed intellectual union of nations." He hoped to see the world "flooded with one gorgeous blaze of intellectual light and glory," and predicted: "Then will all national and political prejudices be melted down into one confluent mass, forming an harmonious scientific commonwealth, whose ensign shall be knowledge, and whose motto shall be peace!" Florid his words might be, overstated his ideal, but his achievement was in fact enormous. With his ability to sway audiences, he was a superb salesman for his obsession. It is not too much to say that Alexandre Vattemare was one of the unsung, little-remembered benefactors of mankind.

In Paris, on the Rue de Clichy, Vattemare established, and maintained at his personal expense, his Central Agency for International Exchange (as time went on, modest subscriptions to its cost came from various countries). Through that agency, he intended Paris to be "the great heart of the world, receiving from all quarters, and transmitting spontaneously in every direction, through the central committees, the intellectual life blood of nations, their literature, their sciences, arts and industry."

As the exchange system was proving its worth in Europe, some of Monsieur Alexandre's friends who had been abroad and had noted the meager status of American libraries urged him to take a look at the United States. Among these was the aging Marquis de Lafayette, recently back from his farewell tour of America, in the course of which he had been ceremonially welcomed at the State Capitol in Albany. It would be nice to think that he had mounted the stairs and inspected the infant State Library, and decided it needed help.

Nothing appealed more to Vattemare than a new world to conquer. As he told it afterward: ". . . there was another vast continent where my system was as yet unknown—a land which possessed no antique works, but was rich in objects of natural history. There, too, was a republic, whose laws were anxiously sought after by jurists of Europe, and whose citizens would doubtless be happy to receive those of the old world in exchange for them. I was anxious to see them advance and take an independent place in the republic of letters as they had assumed a distinct nationality—sending forth to all quarters of the earth proofs of their talents, and making universally known the peculiarity of their political institutions as well as their social advancement and their intellectual worth." He sensed that the United States was misunderstood in Europe, "seen through the distorted medium of a foreign press or judged from the narrations of prejudiced travelers"; and that, if true knowledge could be exchanged, "Europe would at once be forced to respect and admire you."

Accordingly, Vattemare landed at New York in the early autumn of 1839—"without friends, without patronage, and almost without acquaintances," to quote a legislative library committee. "He brought with him, however, a passport better than the patronage of princes —an offering of peace and good will to our people. The precious works of science and of art, which were soon after entrusted to his care, gave substantial promise of the value of his mission, and gathered around him friends, wherever he journeyed."

In point of fact, he used his ventriloquism as a key to the door of America as well as a means of financing his campaign. His New York debut was made at the Park Theatre soon after his arrival, and the New York *Herald* applauded it: "This gentleman is the most extraordinary man of his age. He never was equalled as a ventriloquist, and his wonderful power of mimicry, imitations, and rapid changes, render his performance

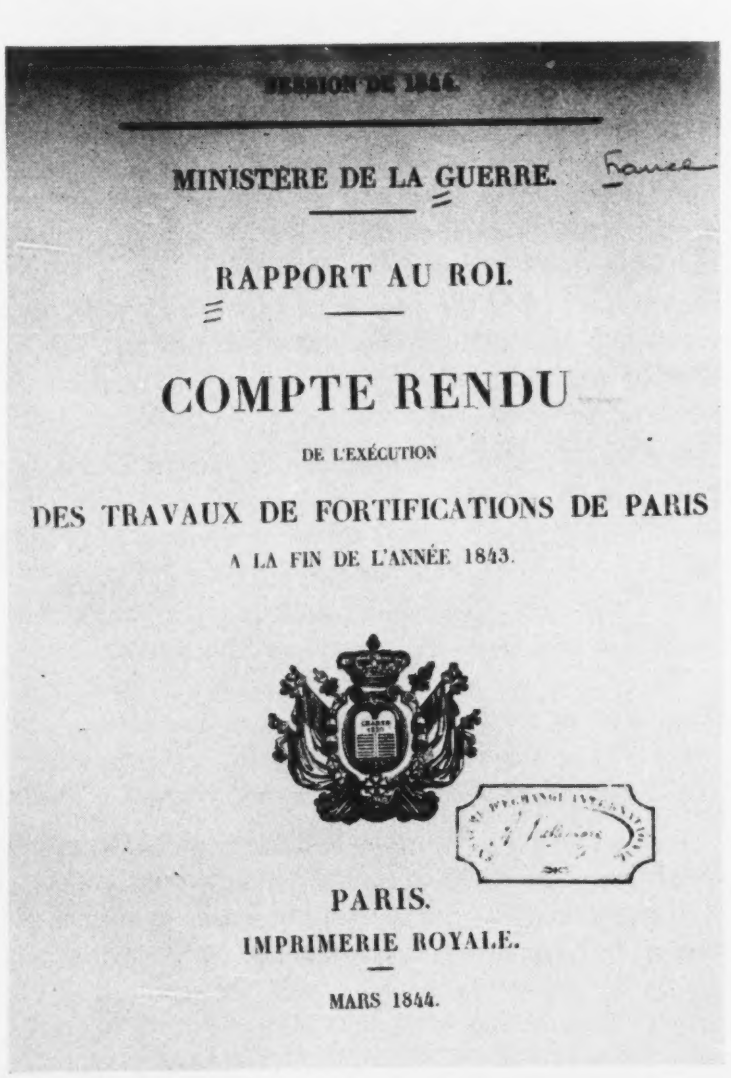
unrivalled." Theatrical bookings ensued in other cities where his true objective was not the plaudits of audiences but visits to their libraries. When he saw them, "My first sentiments were those of despair," he confided to the New York Legislature, "for I found no public institutions like our own, open free to the *public,* nothing founded by the people *for the people,* and therefore no means of laying the treasures which I proposed to bring into the United States before the people. But when I conversed with the citizens—when I found myself hailed with acclamation—when thousands thronged to hear me narrate what I had to communicate—and the good and the great, the gifted and the wise, without reference to religious or political distinctions, came to the aid of my scheme, I found my heart lifted up with joy and hope, for I saw that what seed I might sow, in my humble manner, would not fall upon barren ground, and I awaited the harvest."

Among his encouragements at this stage was a letter from Washington Irving, postmarked from Albany, saying: "It is a noble and magnanimous scheme, worthy of the civilization of the age, and the advantages of which are so obvious that they must strike every intelligent mind at a single glance."

The Library of Congress was his prime target, and Vattemare presented a memorial to the House of Representatives, in which he suggested that the librarian of Congress should open correspondence with all states of the Union and with foreign powers to ascertain what might be available for exchange and what they might like to have as a return. Congress passed a resolution "authorizing" the librarian to start such proceedings, but not "directing" him; and there was little practical result until Vattemare returned several years later and was appointed international agent for the Library of Congress.

After Washington, Vattemare trained his guns on the state Legislatures, making a point of visiting every state capital. Maine was the first state to plump for his system and to make him the European agent for its state library. He brought favorable resolutions from Louisiana when he reached the Albany statehouse and addressed the Senate on May 5, 1840. He assured the Senators that he had no personal interest in the plan beyond a philanthropic desire to "promote the cause of civilization throughout the world." In order for the State Library to participate, he conjectured that no appropriation would be needed; pointing out that such publications as the forthcoming reports of the State's Natural History Survey would be ideal for exchange with European governments and libraries. The State, he said, would have to do little more than organize the exchanges. Although the Legislature did not formally commit the State then and there to the system, it came close enough to indicate general approval. Governor Seward designated Vattemare as European agent for distribution of the Natural History Survey publications. When he went home, Vattemare carried with him, as gifts from Seward, 14 sets of the reports so far issued, and presented them to selected officials, including King Louis Philippe of France. As he had predicted, these were highly regarded in Europe, and brought generous reciprocation.

Four years later Vattemare wrote the Board of Regents, by then the library trustees, urging: ". . . that all my efforts to realize the great and blessed intellectual union of nations, will be reconsidered by both Houses; and that measures, somewhat similar to those adopted by several States of the Union and by all Europe, will be adopted by the Legislature at its next session . . ."


SESSION DE 1844.

MINISTÈRE DE LA GUERRE.

RAPPORT AU ROI.

COMPTE RENDU

DE L'EXÉCUTION

DES TRAVAUX DE FORTIFICATIONS DE PARIS

A LA FIN DE L'ANNÉE 1843.

PARIS.

IMPRIMERIE ROYALE.

MARS 1844.

Title page of a document published by the French Minister of War in 1844, among the earliest acquisitions of the State Library through the Vattemare system of international exchange. Note the Vattemare stamp beside the crest.

In the 1844 report of the trustees which cited the foregoing letter, note was made of "sundry donations from the French government and from M. Vattemare"; precisely, the gifts had come from the French Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce, the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of Justice, and the Secretary of Finance. The Regents proposed "some legislative provision . . . to reciprocate this marked attention." The 1845 Legislature took the hint and passed an act authorizing the library trustees to "transmit to the French government, and to such other foreign governments as may have made donations to this state, in books or works of art, a duplicate copy of the Sessions Laws and Legislative Documents of this state."

Although the New York Legislature had been slow to act, the impact of Monsieur Alexandre was building up, and it was a tonic toward systematizing exchange activities with other states—in effect, the true beginning of what is today the Gifts and Exchange Section of the State Library. Interstate exchanges had not yet developed to any great extent when the altruistic Frenchman came breezing upon the scene. In fact, in 1840 the state libraries of Massachusetts and New York exchanged journals and documents, and the Regents were moved to comment: "This interchange is so beneficial, that no hesitation was felt in approving it; and it is respectfully suggested whether the system of exchanging legislative documents with other states and countries may not be directed by law, and extended with signal advantages to ourselves."

Vattemare did not restrict his exchanges to books. They could be pictures, engravings, or other art objects, scientific specimens, almost anything illustrative of culture. To the Mercantile Library of San Francisco he wrote: "Give us a bullfrog or a rattlesnake for the best moral and philosophical works, an alligator for a cast of the Venus de Milo." He supplied the New York State Library with instructions for preserving and transporting "objects of Natural History," prescribed by the staff of the Museum of Natural History at Paris.

With or without reciprocation, cases of books began arriving at the New York State Library from a variety of European sources. The Regents made a special report to the Legislature on October 20, 1847, saying:

> The Trustees of the State Library beg leave to call the attention of the Legislature to the numerous and very valuable donations recently made to the Library, through the agency of M. Vattemare, the founder and most active and efficient supporter of the system of International Exchanges. These donations are from the King of the French, the Government of Sweden, the Chamber of Peers of France, the Chamber of Deputies, the Royal Library of France, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Public Instruction, the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Commerce and Agriculture, the Minister of the Marine, the City of Paris, the Minister of Public Works, the National Institute, the Geological Society, the Royal and Central Society of Agriculture, the Philotechnique Society of Paris, Viscount Cormenin, the Marquis de Pastoret, M. Edward Alletz, M. A. Jullien, E. Cauchy, M. Vivien, A. Bailly and M. Jal, consisting, in addition to a large collection of Charts published by the Department of the Marine of France, of about four hundred and eighty-seven volumes, many of which are of imperial folio, folio and quarto sizes, and of great rarity and value.

Vattemare, as it happened, was already back for his second American crusade, and by invitation was to address the Legislature in the Assembly Chamber the very night of that report. In the speech, he described his system again at length, and the progress it had made in the interim, and said: "I come to invite you to cooperate with me diligently and faithfully in the establishment upon a *vast and lasting basis,* of a well regulated system of exchange, between all the civilized nations of the two hemispheres."

Two days later, Vattemare delivered the following communication to the Speaker of the Assembly:

> Sir—Hearing that several members of the Legislature have expressed a wish of becoming more thoroughly acquainted with some of the scientific works, and other objects of art I brought out from France as presents to this State, now exhibited in the State Library,
>
> I take the liberty of begging of you, sir, to have the goodness of informing the honorable members of the House of Assembly, that I shall be this afternoon, and the following Saturday and Monday, the whole of the day, (hours of meals excepted), at the State Library ready to give them every explanation they may require in relation to the said objects.

On October 25, the joint library committee on international exchanges brought in its report, highly commendatory of Vattemare, saying: "But while we are thus reaping the profits of the system of Vattemare and enjoying the literary feast provided by our enlightened neighbors across the Atlantic, the question naturally arises, in the mind of every American—how shall we repay this generosity? . . . It seems . . . to your committee proper that some testimonial more substantial than mere words of kindness and approbation,

should be afforded to this enterprise. . . ." The committee recommended the appointment of "some suitable person in Europe" as agent of the State for international exchanges, and submitted a proposed bill to appropriate $1,000 to the support of Vattemare's Paris agency.

The Legislature passed an act in November 1847, appropriating $1,000 "for the purpose of defraying the expenses of M. Vattemare and other expenses incident to the interchange of statistical, literary, scientific and other valuable books and documents between this state and foreign countries, and the other states of the union." The designation of Vattemare as European agent of the State was implicit in the appropriation. Another law went on the books to supply Vattemare with four copies each of the Journal of the New York Provincial Congress for 1775, 1776, and 1777; two of these sets were earmarked for the French Chamber of Deputies and the American Library in Paris, just then being established largely through Vattemare's efforts. The Legislature followed up its financial support in 1849 with a law appropriating $600 for each of the years 1850 and 1851 "for conducting the system of international exchanges now existing"; and amplified these sums in 1850 with another $500 "for the purpose of defraying the expenses of Monsieur Alexandre Vattemare."

More than once, books coming or going in the Vattemare exchanges were lost by shipwreck. In 1857, a ship bound from France to the United States was wrecked, and three large cases of books sent by Vattemare for the New York State Library were in the water several months. Many of the books were extremely rare and had been collected with great pains. Vattemare later resupplied a large part of the loss.

Once again Vattemare's timing was poor in being away from his homeland. Revolutions swept Europe in 1848, and one of the bloodiest was in France, where King Louis Philippe was dethroned and the Second Republic came into existence; to be followed in 1852 by the Third Empire with Napoleon III on the throne. The revolution delayed Vattemare's return to France until 1851, when he went "overloaded with testimonials of American sympathy for their sister republic." As he later wrote to Dr. S. B. Woolworth, secretary of the Board of Regents at Albany, he had expected to be "received with open arms by the French republicans." Not so. "Judge then of my disappointment on seeing the National Assembly rejecting with disdain the friendly tokens of Congress, of the State of New York, etc. . . . My return was hardly perceived. This disappointment afflicted me very much, but did not relinquish my courage and determination to go ahead, convinced as I was that this unnatural feeling of my beloved country was only temporary." With the help of chief clerks in several departments, he managed to get the exchanges revived by 1855, when the new imperial government took a better view of his system. Napoleon III and his executive departments, wrote Vattemare, "seem happy to have this neutral ground, independent of politics, to give testimonials of their friendly feelings towards the United States."

As one token of this changed attitude, Vattemare was sending along to the New York Library a replica of a huge egg. Geoffrey St. Hilaire, president of the board of the Museum of Natural History in Paris, had arranged to place at his disposal "a copy of each of the gigantic eggs found in 1850 at Madagascar." These had been identified as eggs of the Epyornis, an extinct species said to be the largest bird ever known.

Meanwhile, in spite of the revolutionary interruption in France, foreign donations instigated by Vattemare had kept on flowing to the New York State Library. The Works of Frederick the Great were being successively published by the Prussian government, and each volume as it was issued arrived in Albany as a gift from the King of Prussia. The King of the Netherlands sent along a major work on the Empire of Japan which was in process of publication under his auspices. The government of Austria donated "magnificent works on botany and Oriental literature." Splendid gifts came from Norway and from St. Petersburg. His Holiness, Pope Gregory XVI, sent from the Vatican a very large collection of "elegantly executed copper plate engravings copied by able artists from paintings of the masters; and also specimens of medals struck during his pontificate."

Vattemare died in 1865, and the annual report of the State Library trustees gave him an obituary notice: "The system of international exchange established by M. Alexandre Vattemare in 1840 has terminated by his death. This library was long connected with that system, and the Trustees bear willing testimony to the zeal with which its author devoted his energies to its support. If it failed fully to secure his high expectation, 'The intellectual union of nations,' it certainly contributed to a more extended dissemination of their literature and a better knowledge of what each was accomplishing in the discoveries of science. The Trustees of the library confidently hope to be able to continue and extend their foreign exchanges by their correspondence with learned societies and through the aid of our own foreign ministers and consuls."

As a measure of Vattemare's services may be cited an 1883 estimate that the total value of gifts from foreign governments then in the possession of the New York State Library was $50,000.

By a statute of the early 1890's, the Regents were authorized to maintain a Duplicate Department of the State Library for facilitating exchanges. The exchange activities continued to grow, and in 1949 the Gifts and Exchange Section was established. At the time of this publication, the section had ties with more than 4,000 libraries around the world and distributed close to 200,000 items a year, receiving even more than that number. In this way, the library is enriched by materials not obtainable in the normal book trade.

5. The Poet as Librarian

The State Library was still a house physically divided when the Board of Regents stepped in as its trustees. That is to say, the law section was on the north side of the Capitol, the miscellaneous library on the south, and judges, lawyers, litigants, and witnesses in the courts tramped between. The 1840 Legislature had granted a generous $3,000 for "fitting up in the Capitol a room or rooms contiguous to each other for the reception and safe keeping of the whole of the state library." Somehow or other, $2,500 of that fund had been expended for books instead, and none at all for room changes.

One of the first thoughts the Regents had about their new responsibility was that the library ought to be an entity, and they looked around for a solution. Venturing into the little-used third floor of the Capitol they discovered a vacant room directly over the law library, with another behind it which could be conveniently annexed. The board suggested that the Miscellaneous Library might "with great advantage" be transferred to those two overhead rooms, and connected by a stairway with the law library, "and thus enable the officers of the library mutually to assist each other. . . instead of being separated." A slightly quizzical note is detectable in the first report of the Regents as trustees, remarking that the intent of the Legislature of 1840 had not been carried out and that $500 of the appropriation was still theoretically available. Some legislators felt that the prior statute may have fallen dormant and that a fresh enactment was advisable. Accordingly the Regents, having become "deeply impressed with the importance of the proposed alteration," recommended it to the 1845 Legislature as "one calculated in every way to increase the security of the library and to promote the convenience and accommodation of those who desire access to it." The Governor, Silas Wright, was both an ex officio member of the Board of Regents and chairman of the Capitol Trustees, which simplified matters.

The Legislature complied, but with some slight variations from the Regents plan. The statute directed the uniting of two rooms above the Assembly Chamber and fitting them up "for the reception and safe keeping of the miscellaneous library"; while the room over the law library was appropriated to the uses of that unit, to be connected with it by a spiral stairway. At the 1846 session, the lawmakers passed another law to "complete the improvements contemplated" in the 1845 measure. At the same time, they resolved to have carpets laid in the library rooms.

With gratification, the Regents were able to report in January 1847, that "the improvements directed by the last Legislature to be made, have been completed. The law rooms have been thrown into one and connected with the Miscellaneous department, while all the floors have been carpeted. The trustees cherish the belief that they have fulfilled the wishes and intentions of the constituted authorities in this matter, and that the appearance and arrangement of the rooms are worthy of the object to which they are devoted, and of the munificence of the State."

Something was done, too, about the tendency of visitors to purloin books from the open shelves. The bookcases in the miscellaneous branch had all been equipped with lockable, wire-screened doors. "The necessity for these, as formerly recommended, has been further shown by the annual report of the Librarian, in which he states that several volumes have been lost previous to their erection."

The Board of Regents at this time established a trend of development in the collections of the State Library which has prevailed all down the years: namely, a strong emphasis on the history of New York State and of the United States. "The Trustees," said a report, "were desirous to show as early as possible that they esteem this a paramount object, and to accumulate, as far as was in their power, every work of interest or value relating to the United States." Several timely auction sales in New York City helped to swell acquisitions in those areas. The board also worked to remedy deficiencies found in "treatises on education, political economy, and practical science."

Illustrative of the stress being placed upon American history, even while it was being made, was the quick appearance of new works on the opening of the West during the dramatic 1840's. The emigrant trains were laboring across the prairies and over the Continental Divide. Harassed by hunger, thirst and Indians, the belated Donner Party became horridly snowbound in the Sierra pass which ever after would bear their name; war with Mexico finally erupted; Brigham Young decided upon Great Salt Lake as the location for "Canaan"; and very soon gold would be discovered at Sutter's Fort in California. The State Library's shelves blossomed with titles such as: *Life in California,* anonymous; *Notes on California and the Placers,* by One

Who Has Been There; *The History of Texas,* or the *Emigrant's, Farmer's and Politician's Guide to that Country; The Oregon Question;* John C. Fremont's *Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in 1842, and to Oregon and North California in 1843-44,* with a map; *Oregon, Our Right and Title,* by Wyndham Robertson; *A Campaign in New Mexico, with Colonel Doniphan,* by Frank S. Edwards; *Two Years Before the Mast,* by Richard Henry Dana. By the early 1850's, exchanges of state documents were operative between the State Library and the newly created states of California and Texas; not much later, with Utah.

The library's catalog was "confessedly imperfect," for which reason (in the trustees' view) the miscellaneous branch was "almost useless, to such as wish to examine and collate the works in it." Its "most radical defect" was neglecting the names of authors in the alphabetical arrangement—a defect which could not be corrected, said the board, without a thorough revision of the system. Indeed, a satisfactory method of cataloguing and shelving was a problem that plagued all libraries of that era as they increased in size; the New York library could not have foreseen that one day it would play a leading role in solving the difficulty.

One clue to what John Tillinghast was doing as State librarian during that period is an item of $200 allotted him by the Legislature in 1847, over and above his salary, for "indexing" the library's collections. Now, in reaction to the Regents criticism, acquisitions began to be listed alphabetically by author as well as title.

By the start of 1848, the State Library possessed 17,571 volumes, of which 7,399 were law books, and 10,172 were in the miscellaneous category.

Meanwhile, it seems that the Regents were on the lookout for a State librarian who was himself a literary personage; whose name itself would lend prestige to the institution. Under their very noses in Albany was a man to meet that requirement. In 1842 he had published his first book, a long poem entitled *The Burning of Schenectady,* based on the Schenectady Massacre.

The small book had a promising sale. In 1845, a New York publishing house issued *The Poems of Alfred B. Street,* bringing together more than 300 pages of verse, much of which had earlier appeared in various periodicals. In the Preface, the poet shed some light upon himself: "The early life of the Author was spent in a wild and picturesque region in the southwestern [southeastern?] part of New York, his native state. Apart from the busy haunts of mankind, his eye was caught by the strongly marked and beautiful scenes by which he was surrounded: and to the first impressions thus made, may be attributed the fact, that his subjects relate so much to Nature and so little to Man."

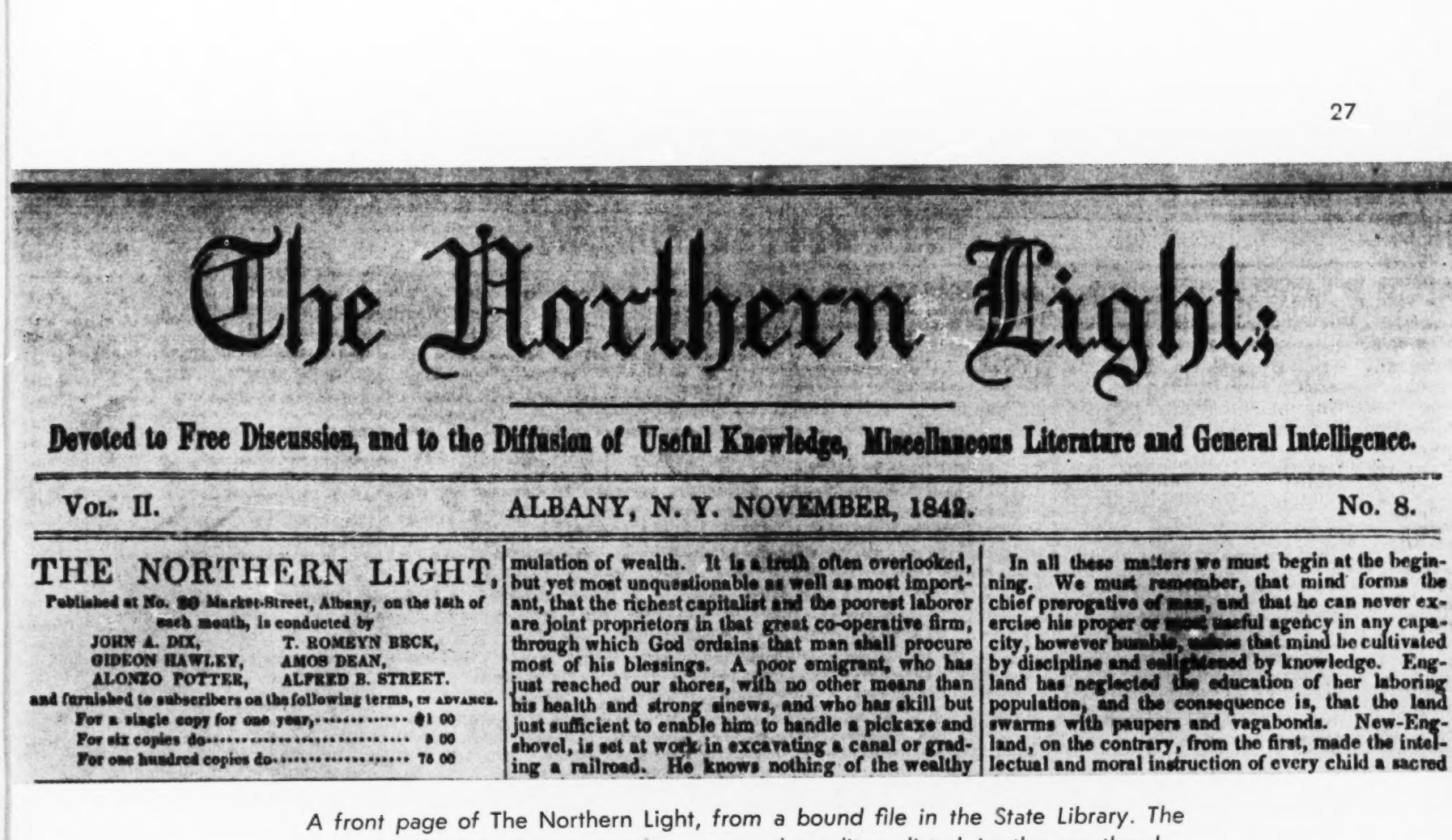
In other words, Alfred Billings Street—a small, mild-mannered, spectacled man—was of the nature-poet breed. He was praised for his precise descriptive power; Thoreau once said that Street often detected nuances of Nature which had eluded him. Edgar Allan Poe commended him as a descriptive poet, adding: ". . . he appears, however, not at any time to have been aware that mere description is not poetry at all." A contemporary critic, Samuel Alliboãl, rated his place among American poets as "the same as that generally assigned to Dryden among English poets,—one of the first of the second class." A successor as State librarian, Dr. James I. Wyer, wrote: "Though he was diffuse, repetitious, sometimes over-minute, his verse scarcely deserves the neglect into which it has fallen." Street was capable of lines like these:

> Blue sky, pearl cloud, and golden beam
> Beguile my steps this summer day,
> Beside the lone and lovely stream,
> And mid its sylvan scenes to stray:
> The moss, too delicate and soft
> To bear the tripping bird aloft,
> Slopes its green velvet to the sedge,
> Tufting the mirror'd water's edge,
> Where the slow eddies wrinkling creep
> Mid swaying grass in stillness deep:
> The sweet wind scarce has breath to turn
> The edges of the leaves, or stir
> The fragile wreath of gossamer
> Embroider'd on yon clump of fern.

Alfred B. Street was born in Poughkeepsie in 1811, the son of a lawyer who went on to become a district attorney and a Congressman. When he was 14, the family crossed the Hudson to settle in Monticello, Sullivan County, and the lad imbibed his lasting love of nature by roaming in the nearby Catskills. After an ordinary schooling, he studied law in his father's office and practiced in Monticello for a few years, though his bent ran to letters. Street began sending verses to papers and magazines during his teens. In quest of wider horizons, he opened a law office in Albany in 1839 and soon won notice with his poems and prose pieces in the local press. He married an Albany girl, who bore him three sons.

A publication to which Street became a steady contributor was a literary journal, the *Northern Light,* sponsored by an élite group of Albany citizens during the early 1840's. So well regarded were his writings that he was made chief editor of the *Northern Light.* Social and political circles opened to him in the capital city, and he was elected alderman.

The appointment of Street as State librarian was announced in March, 1848. No public explanation was



The Northern Light;

Devoted to Free Discussion, and to the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, Miscellaneous Literature and General Intelligence.

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THE NORTHERN LIGHT,

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mulation of wealth. It is a truth often overlooked, but yet most unquestionable as well as most important, that the richest capitalist and the poorest laborer are joint proprietors in that great co-operative firm, through which God ordains that man shall procure most of his blessings. A poor emigrant, who has just reached our shores, with no other means than his health and strong sinews, and who has skill but just sufficient to enable him to handle a pickaxe and shovel, is set at work in excavating a canal or grading a railroad. He knows nothing of the wealthy

In all these matters we must begin at the beginning. We must remember, that mind forms the chief prerogative of man, and that he can never exercise his proper or most useful agency in any capacity, however humble, unless that mind be cultivated by discipline and enlightened by knowledge. England has neglected the education of her laboring population, and the consequence is, that the land swarms with paupers and vagabonds. New-England, on the contrary, from the first, made the intellectual and moral instruction of every child a sacred

A front page of The Northern Light, *from a bound file in the State Library. The name of Alfred B. Street appears among the editors listed in the masthead.*

offered for the dismissal of John Tillinghast, who simply went back to his neglected law practice. The previously quoted Dr. Wyer suggested that Street's friends got him the post "more in recognition of his renown as a poet than for competence as a librarian." However that may be, Street went into the job with serious motive and intent, and learned all he could about being a librarian.

By a statute of 1847, salary of the State librarian was set at $700. He had an assistant librarian, at $500 per annum, and even a messenger, at $250.

Diligent as he was in his library duties, Street did not by any means give up writing. In the year after taking the position, he published one of his better-known long poems, *Frontenac;* also a rhetorical salute, *Our State,* composed for delivery before the Literary Societies of the University of the City of New York. Often he produced poems on order, so to speak, for particular occasions. He was the author of a long poem written for the opening of the Army Relief Bazaar in Albany in 1864, during which the original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was the prize in a lottery.

Although scarcely the rugged outdoor type, Street did not abate his passion for the rocks and rills. He explored more deeply than ever before into the wilderness, and, with awestruck interest, into the high Adirondacks. Those northern mountains were as yet of difficult access and rather mysterious to the ordinary traveler. The hardy excursions made by the poet-librarian led to prose descriptions of what he had seen, the most notable work being *The Indian Pass,* in the introduction of which he gave a reasonably careful history of the Adirondacks. In appreciation of his literary service to that northern region, an Adirondack peak is now named Street Mountain.

Street became director of the library just in time to rejoice in its first great documentary windfall. In December 1847, the Legislature took this action:

"Resolved, That the Secretary of State be directed to deliver to the Regents of the University, to be preserved in the State Library, all such documents of historic interest, relative to, or connected with the annals of the State, as are now kept in the store-room of his department, and as he may deem advisable and proper to be so transferred and delivered."

That resolution was not the result of sudden inspiration or a desire on the part of the Secretary of State to unload a few tons of old papers. Behind it lurked an interesting story.

After a good deal of prodding by the New-York Historical Society, which insisted that the State ought to pull together all available documentary material relating to its colonial history and see to its preservation, the Legislature authorized the appointment of an agent to seek out such documents in the archives of Holland, England, and France. If originals could not be obtained, the agent was to have them copied. An Albany resident,

John Romeyn Brodhead, was assigned this task in 1841. Brodhead had served as attaché at the American legation in The Hague, under his kinsman, Harmanus Bleecker. Before sailing, he tried to learn what documents the State already had, to avoid duplication. He found bundles of Dutch documents, neglected and in utter disorder, stored in boxes "in almost inaccessible corners in the old State Hall" (the original State building in downtown Albany). Pressed for time, he was able to take only a few random notes on what was there. Brodhead ransacked the archives of Europe for three years, returning with 80 volumes of transcriptions which were added to what the Secretary of State already had in his keeping. Fortunately, a new State Hall had just been completed on the hill, where the stored documents were at least more accessible.

In the meantime, another persistent "detective" had become interested in those mouldy records. Dr. Edmund B. O'Callaghan was a young physician, blessed with Irish wit and charm, who had adopted Albany as his home. From his native Ireland, he had gone to Paris to study medicine and had learned the French language. With this bilingual talent, he found Montreal a likely place to set up practice. There he was implicated in Papineau's Rebellion of 1837—an abortive French-Canadian gesture against British rule led by Louis J. Papineau. When it failed, O'Callaghan fled with Papineau to Albany where he began a new medical practice. He liked Albany so well that he refused the Canadian amnesty which later allowed Papineau to return home.

Dr. O'Callaghan was another professional man with a talent for the pen. Like Street, he was a frequent contributor to the *Northern Light,* and no doubt the two soon became friends. About the same time, the Anti-Rent Wars flared and the *Northern Light* ran articles about them. Such rebellion against entrenched authority intrigued O'Callaghan and he began to study the patroon system which had given rise to it. This led him into a search for the Van Rensselaer land grants, and soon O'Callaghan had his fingers into the documents stored by the Secretary of State's office. Finding them nearly all in Dutch script, he gave himself a fast course in that language in order to translate them.

O'Callaghan was amazed that such priceless records had been so ignored. Mining them for material, he went to work on a *History of New Netherland,* the first volume of which appeared in 1845, a second in 1848. This brought him into contact with such influential men as Dr. Beck, secretary of the Board of Regents, who wrote an endorsement for the book; Harmanus Bleecker, of the Albany Dutch; and John V. L. Pruyn, another scion of Dutch aristocracy, chairman of the library committee of the Board of Regents.

In such circumstances, it is not surprising that the Legislature placed historical documents in the custody of the State Library; nor is it surprising that Dr. O'Callaghan was hired to arrange and index them. In a special report to the Legislature in February, 1849, the Regents acknowledged receipt from the Secretary of State of "a large number of documents on paper and parchment," and said: "It needed only a cursory examination to be convinced of their great interest and value. As Dr. O'Callaghan had already distinguished himself by his researches into the early annals of the State, the Committee specially charged with the subject, requested him to collect and describe them."

* * * *

By far the greatest prize of the lot was a parchment scroll which proved to be the original Charter of Charles II, King of England, granting the Province of New York to his brother James, Duke of York, in 1664. "It is in comparatively good preservation," the Regents asserted, "the ink still retaining its original color." The Charter was framed under glass and hung inside the entrance of the Miscellaneous Library.

Several royal commissions were discovered by O'Callaghan, the oldest of which was signed in 1689 by William and Mary, appointing Henry Sloughter as Captain General of the Province of New York. He uncovered many oaths of allegiance, land patents, and rolls of laws of the Provincial Assembly. The Regents said: "It needs not to be concealed that many of these parchment records were in a very dilapidated condition. The greater part of the last spring and summer was occupied by competent workmen in cleaning them, repairing injuries, and otherwise preparing them for public inspection. Upwards of 360 sheets of parchment have thus undergone the above necessary process. . . . The Regents bear willing and cheerful testimony to the industry and research of Dr. O'Callaghan in his valuable notes and annotations on these rolls."

O'Callaghan had found a new career. The State engaged him to edit the documents, together with those brought from Europe by Brodhead, and many more that were later acquired. The doctor-turned-historian

devoted himself to the task until 1870. The results, eventually adding up to 15 quarto volumes, were published as *Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York*. Their publication was begun in 1853, and they were among the items especially prized by European libraries.

Alfred Street served as State librarian until 1862, and was subsequently law librarian until 1868. He never stopped writing. In his twilight years he was described as "a taciturn, serene-faced old man," who "limped into the *Argus* office to read proofs on a Christmas story he had contributed." He died in 1881.

6. A Roof of Its Own

The donation of engravings and medals made by Pope Gregory XVI through Alexandre Vattemare so impressed Governor Hamilton Fish that he described it in a special message in February, 1849. Gratitude for the gift was not the Governor's only motive. He wished to convince the Legislature that the crowded library simply had no space left to display such gifts.

Governor Fish then introduced a subject which everyone would have preferred to ignore—the ever-present menace of fire.

Such bestowals as the Pope's, coming on top of the normal book additions, said the Governor, "have indicated the necessity of more extensive accommodations than are furnished by the rooms now appropriated for the use of the Library. Many interesting books and works of art, which belong to the Library, are closed to the public, for want of the proper facilities for their exhibition; and the Trustees of the Library are unable to suggest any mode whereby the engravings now received from the Pope, can be suitably exhibited within the present rooms."

He went on: "In addition to the scant accommodation of the present rooms, the Library is in constant danger from fire. The introduction of a new mode of heating into the building . . . is constantly jeopardizing the valuable treasures which the State has gathered into its library. It is stated that the building in which the library is placed has been three times on fire during the present season."

When that Legislature ignored the warning, Governor Fish prodded the next one a little harder. Summing up concerning the cramped quarters, he said: "Uniting all these considerations, and adding to them the comparatively unsafe condition of the present rooms, in reference to the danger from fire . . . I feel it incumbent upon me to recommend an appropriation for additional, if not other apartments for the use of the Library."

Still there was no action. Hamilton Fish was appointed to the U. S. Senate, and the State Comptroller, Washington Hunt, succeeded him as Governor. In his inaugural message, Governor Hunt reiterated the theme: "I concur in the views submitted in the last message of my predecessor, in favor of the erection of a new and convenient building for the State Library."

This time the Legisature took heed. An Act was passed on June 19, 1851, for the erection of a "suitable fire proof building without any unnecessary ornament for the state library, with proper arrangements to receive the same, not exceeding one hundred feet in length, and fifty feet in width." The cost was limited to $50,000. The site was to be on land owned by the State directly in the rear of the Capitol, provided that the building could be placed there "without impairing the light of the Assembly Chamber." If the light was going to be impaired, then the Library Building trustees were empowered to purchase some adjacent property. The Act provided for the simultaneous enlargement of the Assembly Chamber's west wall "in an eliptical [sic] form"; i.e., into the space between the Capitol and the proposed library building.

The quarters to be vacated in the Capitol were then to be converted into legislative committee rooms, the statehouse itself being sorely overcrowded. (As far back as 1830, the city and county had moved their offices out of the Capitol into a new City Hall.)

It was quickly determined that the plot of State-owned land behind the Capitol was "not of sufficient extent for the library building without impairing the light of the Assembly chamber." The next lot beyond, with a private structure on it, was purchased for $11,640. To make allowance for the elliptical bulge of the Assembly Chamber, the trustees altered the legislated dimensions of the library, making it 112 feet long by 45 feet wide. Contracts were made for a two-story building of brownstone, brick, and iron, "without any unnecessary ornament." Its entrance would be on State Street, and it was to be connected with the Capitol by an umbilical corridor so that it would be readily accessible to the legislative chambers and the courts. The ground floor would contain the law library, the second floor the miscellaneous library. The reading rooms would be long and narrow, but they would also be tall, and the upstairs room would have skylights. Each reading room was to be flanked by rows of slender pillars of Corinthian style, with alcoves behind the columns. The design provided second-level galleries on either side of the law library.

There was nothing distinctive about the architecture; the Legislature had ruled against any extravagance. It was just a plain building for books, and its capacity was planned for 100,000 volumes. This, it was presumed, would take care of the growth for many years to come.

Ground was broken but construction was not far along when another fire distressed the library world. Shortly before 8 a.m. December 24, 1851, a passerby noticed flame and smoke through the windows of the Library of Congress, which had grown to be a pride and ornament of the United States Capitol and "a most agreeable lounging-place" for Congressmen and sight-seers.

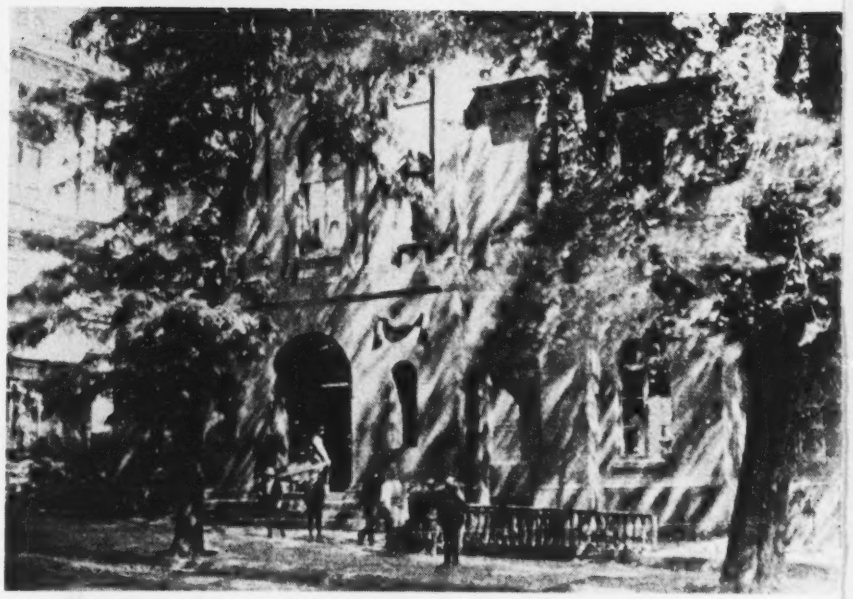
Fire was no stranger to the Library of Congress. Revivified after the British burned it in 1814, it had been damaged again in 1825 but timely discovery of this fire limited the loss mainly to duplicate books. The conflagration of 1851 was infinitely more serious. It threatened the entire Capitol before it was brought under control. Of the library's 55,000 volumes, 35,000 perished, along with many original documents of American colonial history. Thomas Jefferson's superb private library had been acquired in the 1815 restoration, and a major portion of that was now reduced to cinders.

The Washington fire gave pause to the sponsors of the Albany project. Was their fine library going to be as truly fireproof as the legislation dictated? A fortnight later, Governor Hunt alluded to that concern in his annual message: "Warned by the late destruction of the Congressional Library of the necessity of adopting every precaution against a similar calamity in our own case, I deem it proper to recommend to your special consideration the suggestions to be submitted in the report of the Trustees, in relation to the internal arrangement of the building, with a view to the greater security of the valuable collection to be deposited in it."

The ensuing report of the building trustees had this to say:

> The value of the State Library is intrinsically great, and that portion of it especially which relates to American history, if it were lost, could probably never be entirely replaced. It need hardly be suggested that no precaution should be omitted in the erection of the present edifice for its security against fire. There appears to be good reason to believe that if the alcoves and shelves provided for the reception of the books in the Congressional Library had been constructed of iron instead of wood, the destruction of that valuable and costly collection would not have occurred. This material can be very advantageously employed for these purposes in our library building, and as the adoption of it will render the edifice as secure probably as it can be made, it is suggested that the Legislature so direct.

The legislators, also more fire-conscious, authorized the trustees to equip the library with "fireproof alcoves and shelves for the books." An added appropriation of $22,000 was made for that purpose.



Entrance to the State Library building when it faced on upper State Street, connected by a corridor with the old Capitol. The date would have been in the early 1880s, just before its demolition, judging by the progress of construction of the new Capitol, a portion of which may be seen at the extreme left of the picture.

This was not the only increase in cost as the building progressed. For one thing, the trustees altered the original design by adding side galleries to the miscellaneous library, having concluded that "it was expedient as a matter of economy, as well as in view of other obvious considerations, to provide not only for the present, but in some measure for the future wants of the library, which is steadfastly increasing." With other extra amounts for fixtures, fences, and sidewalks, the total allowances for the new library had mounted to $79,000 by early 1854. Then the trustees asked for $12,000 more (and got it), thereby bringing the over-all cost to $91,000 instead of the $50,000 initially legislated. Among the extra items was "iron gauze" as an added fire protection for the shelves.

The move was begun in October, 1854, and was completed, "in somewhat ample order," for the opening of the 1855 legislative session. "But the proper arrangement and distribution of the various works," added the report of this happy event, "and the providing for their security from injury, and above all the novelty of a new and untried disposition of the contents throughout the spacious rooms have involved much consideration, and not a little expense. . . .

"An increase of the staff of the library has, with the enlarged accommodations, become indispensably necessary. An additional assistant librarian is greatly required,

and has been temporarily appointed, waiting the pleasure of the Legislature as to the pecuniary provision."

The new assistant for Alfred Street was already provisionally at work. He was Henry Augustus Homes, lately returned to the United States after a term of diplomatic service in Constantinople.

Unpretentious though it was, the new home was illustrative of the growing prestige of American libraries. Few as yet had their own buildings. When the Library of Congress was again restored, its location remained in the national Capitol, and 40 years would elapse before it finally obtained a separate residence. The Boston Public Library had just moved into a Mason Street schoolhouse, and the cornerstone of its future building was laid in 1855.

The occupancy of the State Library building coincided with a vast expansion in volume of printing and circulation of books. Consequently, acquisitions were henceforth more rapid than anyone had foreseen, and the day when the 100,000-book limit would be passed was nearer than supposed.

Priding themselves on the bettered situation of the library, the Regents, in their 1856 report, exerted a little more pressure on the Legislature, remarking that "large additions in many of its departments" were needed "if it is to keep up with the spirit of inquiry, and the advance in learning, which mark the present age." The report continued:

"From the extent of the Library and the convenience of its arrangements, it is now beginning to be, what it is hoped it will hereafter be, to a much greater extent, the resort of persons who are engaged in literary, scientific, and statistical investigations. . .

"If many of the smaller monarchies of Continental Europe are willing, for the benefit of their subjects, to accumulate stores of learning in their public libraries, to which our collection, considerable as it has become, is comparatively trifling, how much more readily and thoroughly should the government of a free State, the largest in population and the greatest in its resources of any republic in existence, provide for the wants and instruction of its citizens."

The reading room of the General Library while it was connected to the old Capitol. The Law Library occupied the floor below. The branching stairway at the far end leads to side galleries. Note the busts and paintings which made it partly an art museum.

7. Garnering Treasures

By future standards, the most precious early acquisition of the State Library appears to have been the four elephant folios of Audubon paintings, *Birds of America.* Nor was the expenditure of $1,000 a negligible item for that time, even if the measure of value were purely monetary.

Shortly after the Audubon set was completed, a rare opportunity arose for the library to obtain its first major accession of books—that is, a large private collection which had been assembled with unusual taste, care, and effort. Evidently the owner or his agent had offered it for sale as early as 1843, when the New York Assembly adopted this resolution: "That the Trustees of the State Library be directed to enquire into the expediency of purchasing for the use of the State, the collection of books, maps, &c., now in the possession of Mr. Warden of Paris, relating to America."

David Bailie Warden was a cosmopolite of Scottish parentage and American citizenship, past the age of 70, who had lived the last four decades of his life in France. He had been a diplomat, author, and editor, and was an avid collector of books pertaining to the history and geography of the nations of the Western Hemisphere. The collection referred to was the second he had accumulated in his lifetime. The first had been sold for $5,000, in 1823, to S. A. Eliot of Boston for donation to Harvard College. By 1840, after scouring the bookmarts of Europe, Warden had gathered another impressive library, a catalog of which he then published under the title: *Biblioteca Americana: Being a Choice Collection of Books Relating to North and South America and the West-Indies.* This library consisted of 2,185 volumes, 12 atlases, and 121 maps, charts, and plans. The plans were of battles and engagements in the American Revolution. The asking price was $4,000.

David Warden's early life bore some resemblance to that of Dr. E. B. O'Callaghan. Though of Scotch blood, he was born in Ireland and grew up an ardent patriot in the cause of Irish liberation. After studying at the University of Glasgow, he returned and joined the United Irishmen. Arrested for such activity, he was allowed the choice of standing trial or exiling himself to one of the British Dominions. He took the second choice, but instead of a Dominion he fled to the United States. Obtaining a place as principal of the Columbia Academy at Kinderhook, N.Y., he later became head tutor at the Kingston Academy. After acquiring U.S. citizenship, he went to Paris as private secretary to General John Armstrong, Minister to France; and during the War of 1812 was appointed consul and agent for prize causes at Paris. Warden authored a couple of books, settled in France for the remainder of his life, and made a hobby of spreading knowledge about the United States in Europe—which led him into collecting books on the subject.

The inquiry about the Warden Collection was passed on to the Board of Regents when it came into control of the State Library. The nature of the books appealed to the Regents, who had adopted the policy of building up holdings in American and New York history. The library committee sought opinions from several authorities as to the worth of the collection. One was Jared Sparks, professor of history at Harvard, who had lately won renown as editor of the *Writings of George Washington.* Sparks wrote a letter saying: "After a partial examination of the books themselves in Paris, and a careful inspection of the Catalogue, I cannot hesitate to say that I think they would make an extremely important addition to any public library in the United States. . . I know, from my own experience, that books on America are becoming more and more scarce in Europe, because the demand is increasing, and very few of them are reprinted. It is, moreover, a rare chance to find any considerable number of these books on sale at one time."

George Bancroft, the eminent historian, added his voice to the chorus in favor of the purchase. Henry Ledyard, secretary of the American Legation at Paris, examined the collection and wrote: "Many of the editions of the works are rare and curious, which it would be difficult, if not impossible to find elsewhere, and in the works of Spanish discoverers and travellers, it is particularly rich."

The enthusiastic report of the library committee was read to the 1845 Assembly, concluding on this note from Chancellor Peter Wendell: "The State of New York has expended millions upon millions in promoting the physical improvement of her wide spread domain. She will not miss a small tithe devoted to literature and science."

The Legislature was persuaded, appropriating $4,000 —by far the largest lump sum the State had yet allowed for a purchase of books. The collection was boxed and shipped only shortly before Warden died on October 9, 1845. As the Regents regretfully reported, he lived barely long enough "to be apprized of its safe arrival."

They added: "He was, however, cheered in his last days, by the idea that his cherished collection would be preserved in the State of his adoption."

The arrival of the Warden books prompted the trustees to observe that the State Library's historical collection would "in the course of a few years become one of the most extensive and useful in our country." This statement was accurately prophetic. Doors with secure locks were installed on the cases where the Warden volumes were shelved. The financial settlement was made with the executors of Warden's estate. Soon the library was given a portrait of Warden to hang beside the collection, painted by John Vanderlyn, the first American artist to study in Paris.

Another fine private library even larger than Warden's came as a gift from the widow of its owner, Harmanus Bleecker, who died in 1849. Bleecker, descended from old Albany Dutch stock, had been chargé d'affaires at the American legation in The Hague, Holland, and was a former member of the Board of Regents. His library numbered 2,700 volumes.

* * * *

Around mid-century, two documentary bonanzas fell to the State Library which were, from a scholastic viewpoint, downright sensational: the papers of Sir William Johnson and the papers of George Clinton. Together, these established the library's reputation as a center for research in historical source material, and laid the foundation for what would one day become its superb Manuscripts and History Section.

The January 1850, report on the library contained this paragraph:

"The Trustees take great pleasure in stating that Gen. John Tayler Cooper, of this city, has presented to the Library a large collection of the papers of the late Sir William Johnson. They were purchased, with other articles, during the Revolutionary war, in 1776, by the late Lieut. Governor John Tayler."

The importance of Sir William Johnson's letters and records could hardly be overestimated. They covered, in copious detail, the colonial period between 1738 (the year of Johnson's arrival) to 1774 (the year of his death). More than any other man, Johnson opened up the Mohawk Valley for settlement, making it a pathway to the West. He had been, all during this crucial time, superintendent of Indian affairs, holding the esteem of the Iroquois tribes, and thus swung the balance against their going over to the French side in the French and Indian War. He was baronial lord of the vast Johnson estate which centered at Johnstown, and a man of enormous influence in colonial affairs.

The bulk of Sir William's papers were in his Mohawk mansion, Johnson Hall, at his death. When his heirs chose to remain Loyalists, the patriots confiscated the home and lands. A public auction of his effects was later held at Fort Hunter. The coincidence is striking that it was John Tayler who put in the winning bid for the Johnson papers—the same John Tayler who was DeWitt Clinton's Lieutenant Governor and an original trustee of the State Library.

Tayler did not acquire all of the Johnson papers, by any means, but he had a very significant portion of them. Johnson's son, Sir John, buried some of them on the estate before fleeing to Canada; when he later sent a detachment of soldiers to dig them up, they had been ruined by soil moisture. Two other heirs, Guy Johnson and Daniel Claus, carried packets of the papers to England. Still another seven bundles of the papers were deposited in the Secretary of State's office at Albany in 1801, where they remained forgotten until Dr. O'Callaghan got his hands on them.

Tayler's big batch of Johnson documents passed, upon his death, to his kinsman, General John Tayler Cooper, who, by presenting them to the State Library in 1850, set in motion a process of sorting, binding, editing, indexing, further acquisitions, and ultimate publication that went on for more than a century.

Because O'Callaghan was already well indoctrinated by his work in the colonial papers, and had incorporated the seven bundles of Johnson papers from the Secretary of State's office in his *Documentary History,* he was assigned the task of arranging those which now came from General Cooper. Within 5 years he had mounted and bound them into 22 volumes. These were expanded to 26 volumes by two later purchases. In 1863, a small but significant collection was bought from William L. Stone, an author and editor, who had finished a biography of Sir William Johnson begun by his father; the elder Stone had gathered the papers from members of the Johnson family in England and from other sources. In 1866 the library purchased still another cache from Henry Stevens, who had picked them up at a sale of public record papers in London. The final collection totalled 6,550 papers.

Publication of the edited *Sir William Johnson Papers* was begun by the State in 1921. The thirteenth volume, an index to the whole, finally appeared in 1965.

The original purchase of papers of George Clinton was authorized by the Legislature in 1853 with an appropriation of $2,500. The collection had been deposited with the Secretary of State "for inspection." The papers were entrusted to the State Library for arranging, indexing, binding, and lettering; and for that work an added $500 was allowed to the library.

Their original binding was in 23 volumes, and the number eventually increased, with later acquisitions, to 34 volumes containing 8,647 numbers.

It was appropriate, to say the least, that the letters and documents of the first Governor of New York State should find their lodgment in the State Library; a library which, in effect, had been founded by his nephew, DeWitt Clinton. Their historic value needed no underlining: George Clinton had been the "father of his state"; had been seven times its Governor; had been the brigadier-general in charge of the defenses of the Hudson River; had been a statesman of the people, had opposed ratification of the U. S. Constitution for fear of too much federalism, and had led the fight for the Bill of Rights.

O'Callaghan was occupied with the Johnson papers. The person assigned to the preliminary arranging and indexing of the Clinton papers was Orville L. Holley, a former newspaper editor who had switched to State service. As editor of the Troy *Sentinel,* he held the distinction of having given the first publication to an anonymous Christmas poem, *A Visit from St. Nicholas* (*The Night Before Christmas*), whose author was eventually revealed as Clement Clark Moore. By 1856, the library trustees reported that the job had been "very judiciously and thoroughly performed" by Mr. Holley.

It was among the Clinton papers that the so-called "spy papers" of the Benedict Arnold-Major André conspiracy came to light, among the library's most notable possessions. These were the documents concealed in one of André's boots when he was captured near Tarrytown after leaving the rendezvous with Arnold; among them being the sketches of the West Point fortifications and the pass made out to "John Anderson" by Arnold, intended to get André through the patriot lines. The "spy papers" were framed and hung for public display in the new library building. Presently the library was able to obtain a rare aquatint engraving, made at New York in 1780, depicting Major André's passage by rowboat from the sloop *Vulture* to his clandestine landing at Haverstraw; this was from a pen-sketch made by André while awaiting execution.

The ultimate, definitive editing of the Clinton collection was begun early in the 1880's, after a large number of additional papers had been purchased. The Regents at that time expressed their pleasure at being able to engage no less an authority for the task than George W. Clinton of Buffalo: he was a son of DeWitt Clinton, hence a grand-nephew of Governor George Clinton. They reported that he attacked the work "with patriotic as well as filial zeal." In the meantime, the library had secured a diary of Charles Clinton, father of the first Governor, covering the period of his voyage from Ireland to America in 1729; and a journal he had kept of the 1758 campaign of the French and Indian War in which he participated as a militia colonel.

George W. Clinton wrote a lengthy report on his editing work each year. In his report for January 1885, Clinton said: "I have been as happy as an old man can be in my work upon [the papers] . . . and humbly pray that, under your auspices, I may live to finish the precious work."

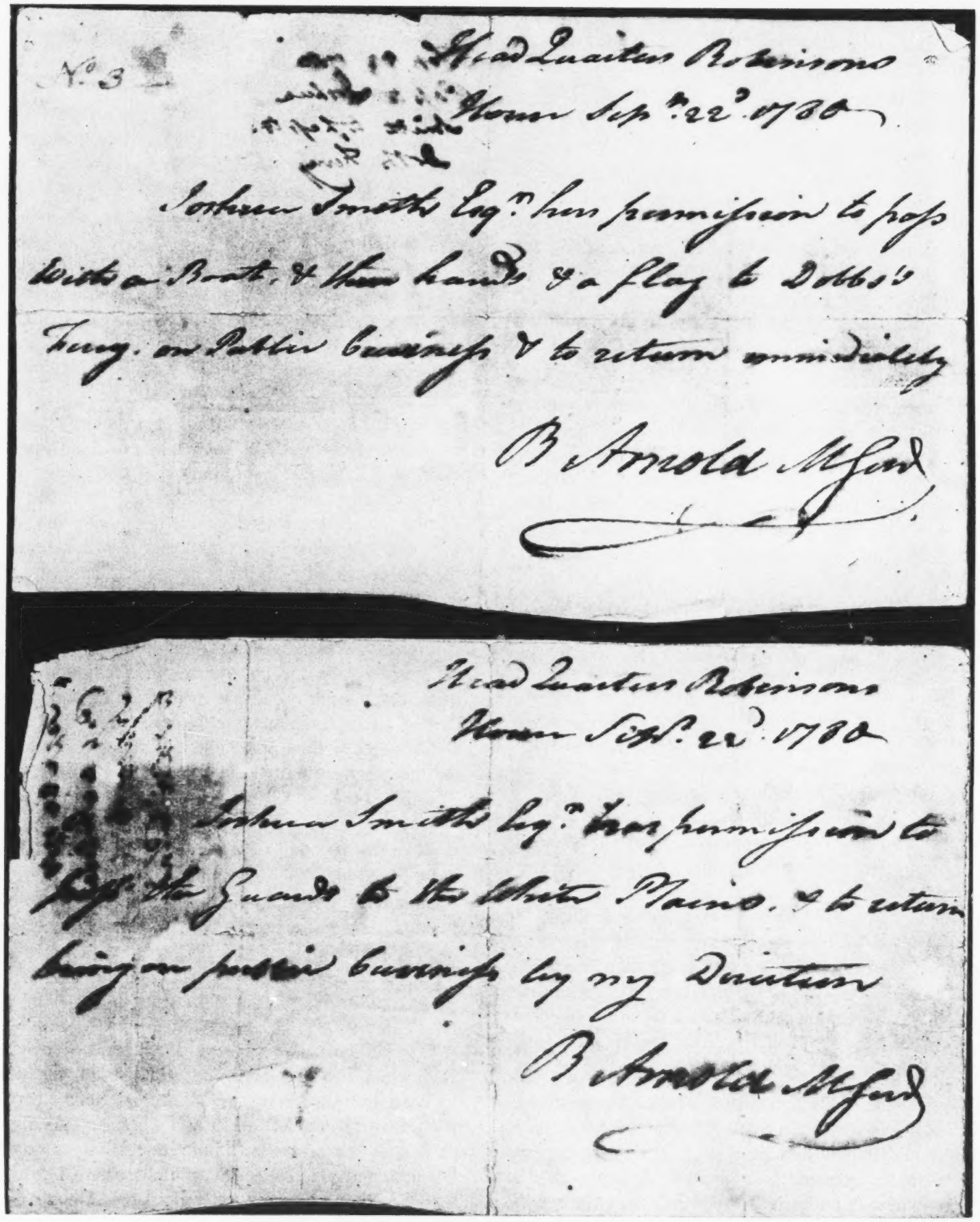
Sadly, his prayer was not answered. The 1886 report of the trustees made note of his death, saying "the work on the George Clinton papers was temporarily suspended," after having been "carried on by him to a good degree of forwardness."

Later in that year, Governor David B. Hill (who had just fired the opening salvo in his prolonged campaign to abolish the Board of Regents) vetoed an appropriation of $3,500 for continuance of the editing of the Clinton papers. In the veto message he said: "The motive for placing [this item] in the supply bill for the five past successive years has been in order to compensate the son of one of New York's most eminent and beneficent citizens for work performed for the State in his declining years. Now that this son, Judge George W. Clinton, is no longer living, there seems to be no reason for perpetuating the appropriation. . . . Over $12,000 has already been expended in the nominal work of indexing and arranging [the papers], and this amount would seem to be amply sufficient and a fair allowance for the purpose, and the work should have been completed."

In spite of Governor Hill's apparent small opinion of the Clinton papers, 14 more bound volumes of them were added after the death of George W. Clinton. Their organizing and indexing was continued off-and-on by various staff members. Their publication was begun in 1899 and completed in 1914, in ten volumes.

* * * *

One of the surviving sons of General Stephen Van Rensselaer, the "last patroon," made a promise in 1850 to have the papers of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck turned over to the State Library. These so-called "Manor Papers" encompassed family documents dating from the first patroon, Kiliaen Van Rensselaer. The trouble was that they were sequestered in the Albany County Clerk's office, and there they remained for more than a half-century despite the Van Rensselaer pledge and several attempts to pry them loose. Not until 1906 were the bulk of the "Manor Papers" transferred to the New York State Library.



No. 3

Head Quarters Robinsons
Home Sep.r 22.d 1780

Joshua Smith Esq.r has permission to pass
with a Boat, & three hands & a flag to Dobbs's
Ferry. on Public Business & to return immediately

B Arnold Maj.r Gen.l

Head Quarters Robinsons
Home Sept.r 22.d 1780

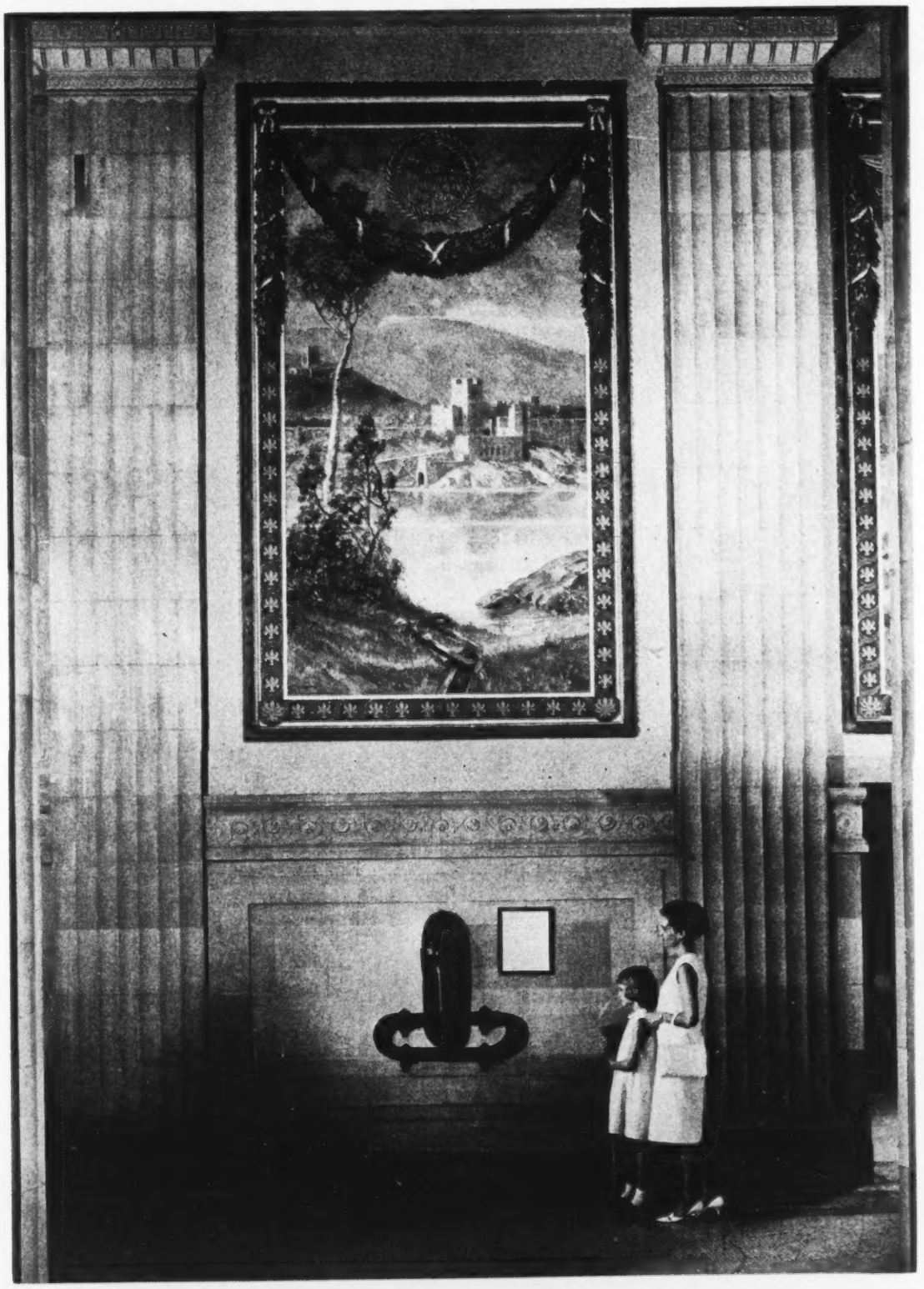
Joshua Smith Esq.r has permission to
pass the Guards to the White Plains. & to return
being on public business by my Direction

B Arnold Maj.r Gen.l

The library owns the so-called "spy papers" which were found in a boot worn by Major Andre when he was captured by patriots after his rendezvous with Benedict Arnold. They were among a collection of the Clinton papers acquired in 1853.

A particularly weighty gift came to the library in 1858, in the form of three huge links of an iron chain. These were from the 1,500-foot chain which was forged in 1778 to stretch across the Hudson as a barrier to British warships. Each link was two feet long, and the chain was stapled to logs for buoys and floated downstream into place. The three links were presented by General Franklin Townsend of Albany, great-grandson of one of the partners in the ironworks which forged them.

Burns Photography, Inc.

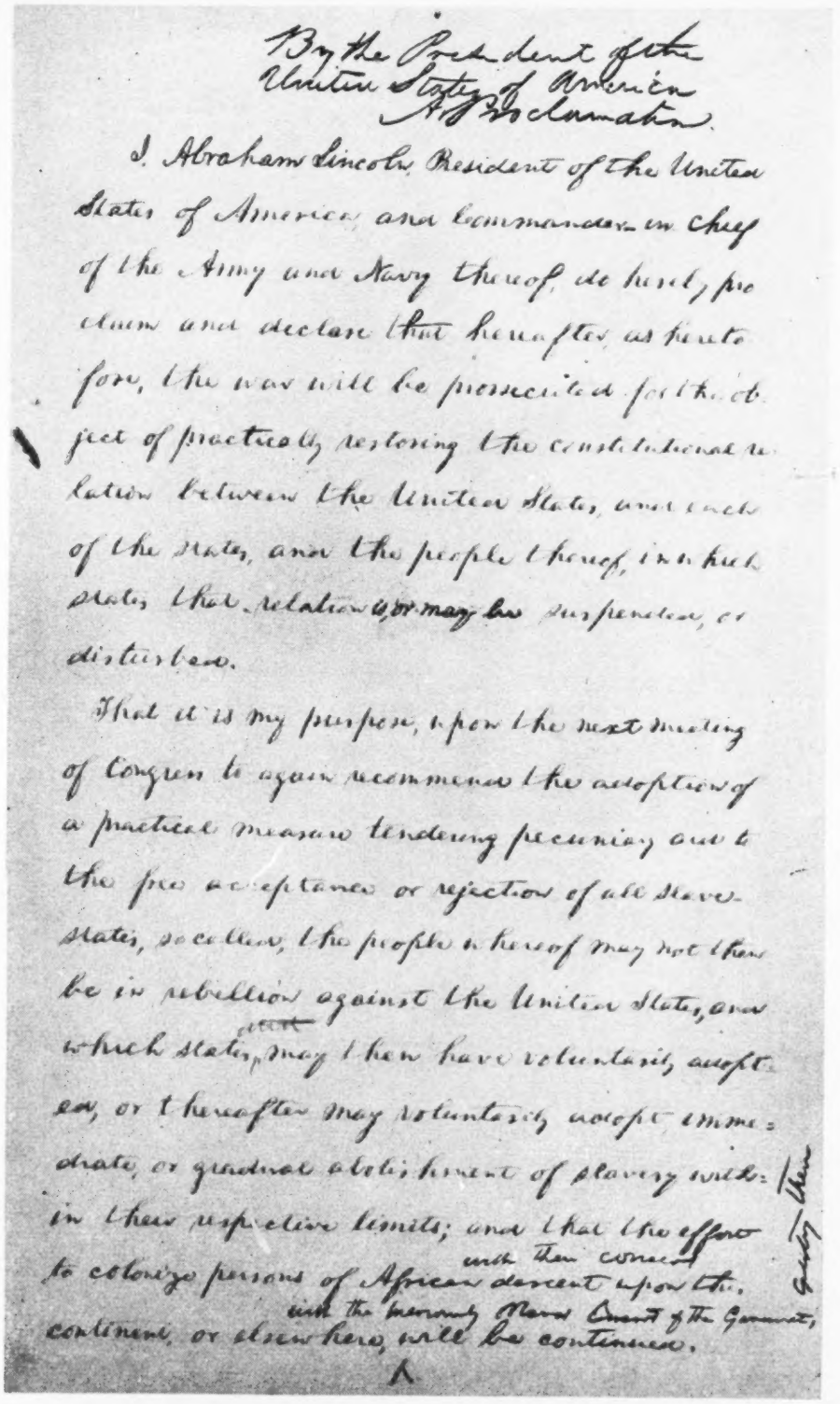


Three heavy links of the iron chain which was strung across the Hudson at West Point during the Revolutionary War were given to the State Library in 1858. This is how they are exhibited today in the rotunda. The mural above suggests their original use, with the links on the shore in foreground.

Exactly two weeks after the assassination of President Lincoln, the New York Legislature passed an appropriation bill in which appeared the following item:

"For Henry W. Bellows, president of the United States Sanitary Commission, for the use of said commission, the sum of $1,000, as a consideration for the original draught of the President's first emancipation proclamation, dated September 22, Anno Domini 1862, to be placed in the State Library."

That was the final act in a series of circumstances which made the State Library the owner of the only surviving draft of the Emancipation Proclamation.



By the President of the
United States of America
A Proclamation

I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States of America, and Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy thereof, do hereby proclaim and declare that hereafter, as heretofore, the war will be prosecuted for the object of practically restoring the constitutional relation between the United States, and each of the States, and the people thereof, in which States that relation is or may be suspended, or disturbed.

That it is my purpose, upon the next meeting of Congress to again recommend the adoption of a practical measure tendering pecuniary aid to the free acceptance or rejection of all Slave-States, so-called, the people whereof may not then be in rebellion against the United States, and which States may then have voluntarily adopted, or thereafter may voluntarily adopt immediate, or gradual abolishment of slavery within their respective limits; and that the efforts to colonize persons of African descent with their consent upon this, with the benevolent Aid and Assistance of the Government, continent, or elsewhere, will be continued.

Opening passage of the original draft of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, in possession of the New York State Library. The main body of the document is in the President's own handwriting, the interlining in the hand of Secretary of State William Seward.

The President had sent his holograph draft of the final Proclamation to Chicago in the fall of 1863 to be raffled off for fundraising at the Northwestern Fair of the U. S. Sanitary Commission. Such money went for the relief of Union soldiers who were wounded, sick, or destitute. That document, after being won in the raffle and netting $10,000, was placed for safekeeping with the Chicago Historical Society. The Society's building was burned in the great Chicago fire of 1871, and with it the final draft of the Proclamation.

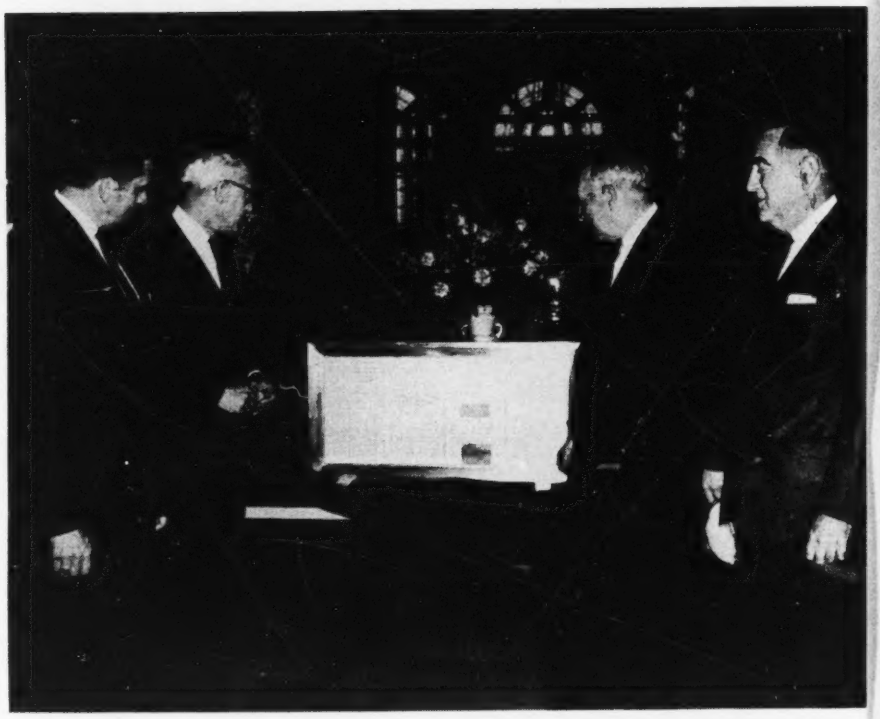
When the city of Albany arranged an Army Relief Bazaar in the winter of 1864, likewise for the benefit of the Sanitary Commission, Lincoln donated his original draft of the Proclamation to be raffled in a similar manner. It was forwarded to Mrs. Emily W. Barnes, daughter of the Albany publisher, Thurlow Weed, by Frederick W. Seward, assistant to his father, Secretary of State William H. Seward. Frederick wrote:

"I have the pleasure of sending you, with the President's permission, the original draft of his September proclamation. The body of it is in his own handwriting, the pencilled additions in the hand of the Secretary of State, and the final beginning and ending in the hand of the chief clerk."

The bazaar, held in a large, rough-board structure hastily erected for the purpose near the old Capitol, opened on February 22 with a program during which Alfred B. Street, by then law librarian, read a lengthy poem he had written for the event, glorifying the Boys in Blue. The bazaar went on for weeks. During its course, chances were sold in the form of lottery tickets, at $1 each, for the grand prize—Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. How much was raised from this raffle is a matter of some uncertainty; but Dr. Henry Homes, State librarian, wrote afterward that it "brought the sum of $1,100." Evidence from other sources indicates that considerably more than that amount of money was realized.

The drawing, from a wheel used in the draft of soldiers, took place on March 9. By a strange coincidence, the first number drawn belonged to Gerrit Smith, the abolitionist leader who was one of the supporters of John Brown in his Harper's Ferry raid; and who, in fact, had allowed him the use of the land for his farm at North Elba in the Adirondacks for a colony of escaped slaves. It is an easy speculation that Smith, a wealthy man, had purchased a large number of tickets. Smith turned around and gave the Proclamation to the Sanitary Commission, which then realized $1,000 more by selling it to the New York Legislature.

Among the nonbook treasures acquired by the library soon after the Civil War is a collection of personal belongings of George Washington, including his surveying



The original draft of the Emancipation Proclamation was given by President Lincoln for the prize in a lottery conducted in connection with an Army Relief Bazaar at Albany. Because the final draft was lost in the Chicago fire, it is now the only surviving one in Lincoln's handwriting, and is one of the State Library's choicest possessions. In 1968, it was encapsulated with nitrogen gas for its better preservation. Viewing it at the encapsulation ceremony in the Library Rotunda are: John A. Humphry, Assistant Commissioner for Libraries; Dr. James E. Allen, Jr., State Education Commissioner; Erastus Corning, Mayor of Albany; and Joseph W. McGovern, Regents' Chancellor.

instruments, a dress sword, and a pistol which had been given him by General Lafayette. It is at least surmisable that, when purchased, the sword bore fingerprints of John Brown. In 1858, the year prior to the Harper's Ferry episode, Brown had sent one of his recruits, John E. Cook, to reconnoiter the area. During the visit, Cook got himself invited into the "Belle Aire" plantation home of Colonel Lewis W. Washington, a great-grandnephew of the first President. The mansion was but 5 miles from Harper's Ferry. Cook was shown the relics of Washington, which were kept in a glass case. He took particular note of the pistol and the sword, and of a family legend (now discredited) that the sword was a gift to Washington from Frederick the Great, King of Prussia. Reporting back to the farm at North Elba, Cook informed Brown of the heirlooms. Then and there, John Brown—with his flair for the dramatic—resolved to have those weapons in his own

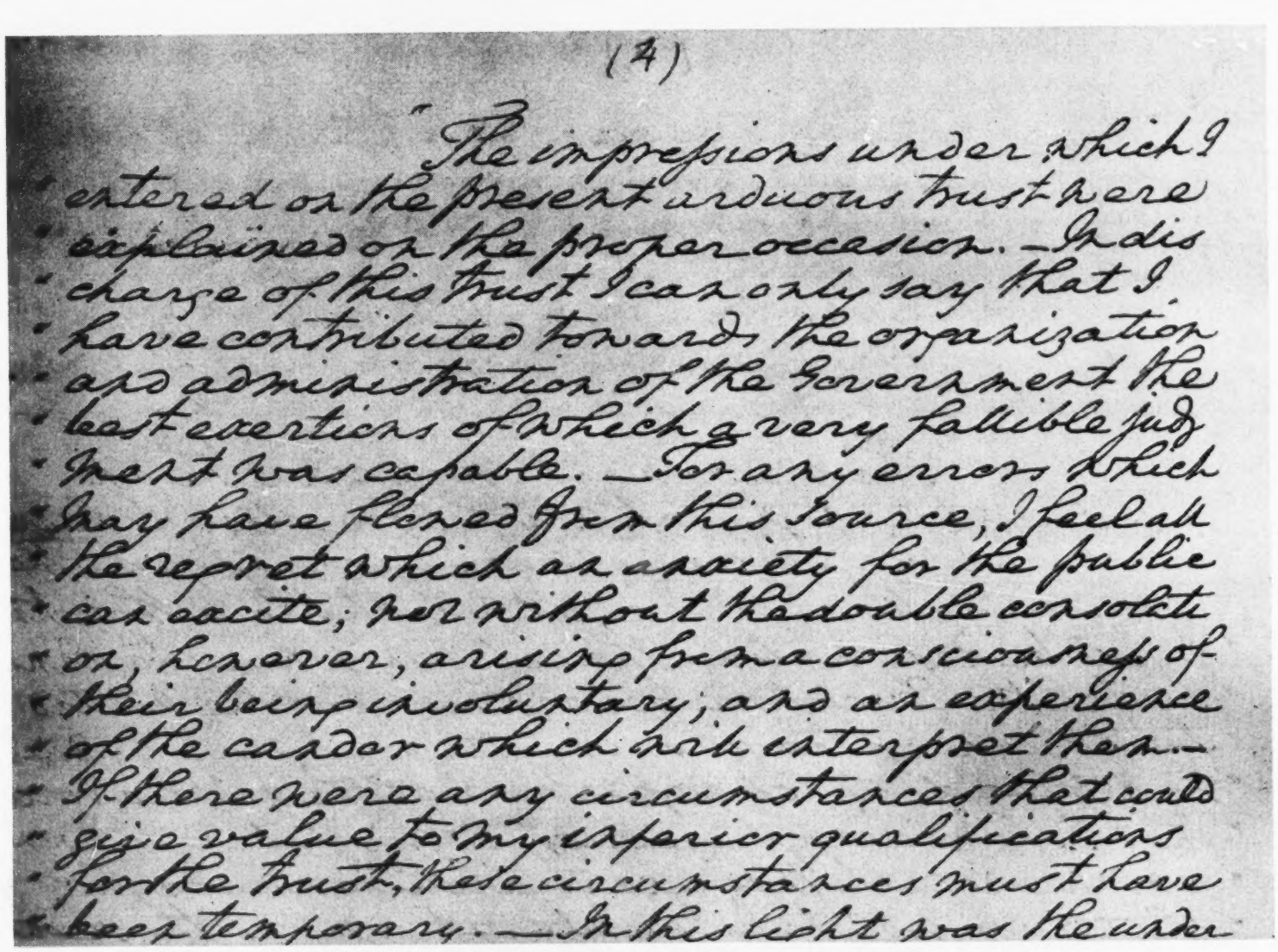
hands when he began the "revolution" for liberation of the slaves.

The first thing Brown did after capturing the armory and arsenal at Harper's Ferry was to dispatch a raiding party, led by Cook, to "Belle Aire." His orders were that Colonel Washington must deliver the sword and pistol into the hands of a Negro member of the party, and this was done. The master of the plantation was then brought back to the armory as a hostage, and all next day he watched Brown stalk about with the Washington sword in his hand. Brown assured him: "I will take especial care of it, and shall endeavor to return it to you after you are released." As it turned out, Washington retrieved both weapons when the federal troops stormed the armory.

Lewis Washington died between then and 1871, when the New York Legislature appropriated an unprecedented sum for an addition to the State Library's possessions: "To Mrs. Lewis W. Washington of Halltown, West Virginia, the sum of $20,000, or so much thereof as may be necessary, for the purchase of certain relics of General Washington, offered by her to the state. . ."

Besides the articles already cited, the list of relics included: the first draft of Washington's Farewell Address as President; his gold watch-chain with two seals; a compass; a tripod used in surveying; measuring chains for surveying; a case of pocket protracting instruments; a tabulated statement of household expenses; and Washington's opinions of the surviving Generals of the the Revolution in 1791.

Needless to say, the documents and relics associated with Lincoln and Washington are of such high historic value that they are not commonly on public display but are kept in a fireproof locked vault. They are brought out only for special occasions. The Emancipation Proclamation, however, will be enshrined as a permanent exhibit in the State Library's future home.



(4)

"The impressions under which I entered on the present arduous trust were explained on the proper occasion. — In discharge of this trust I can only say that I have contributed towards the organization and administration of the Government the best exertions of which a very fallible judgment was capable. — For any errors which may have flowed from this source, I feel all the regret which an anxiety for the public can excite; nor without the double consolation, however, arising from a consciousness of their being involuntary; and an experience of the candor which will interpret them. — If there were any circumstances that could give value to my inferior qualifications for the trust, these circumstances must have been temporary. — In this light was the under-

The 1871 Legislature appropriated $20,000 for the purchase of several relics of George Washington. Among them was the first draft of Washington's Farewell Address, in his handwriting, of which the above is an excerpt.

8. Scholar-Librarian

Once the State Library was settled into its relatively commodious new abode, its use by the public at large burgeoned greatly—rather alarmingly for its overworked staff. For a time it was virtually taken over by the general community. During several winters the State maintained a police guard in the library.

People found it a "warm and comfortable place" in which to while away time in cold weather. One reason for the influx was that the population of Albany was growing rapidly and local residents tended to think of it as their own city library. An even more disturbing reason was the sudden pressure of students, ranging from those of academy age, fulfilling "theme" assignments, to collegians of the Albany Law and Medical Colleges and the Albany Normal School.

Still, it was not intended to be a public library in the usual sense. To the degree in which it was public, it belonged to the people of the entire State, not just to those of the city in which it was situated. The influx of students and loiterers was at times so heavy as to seriously hamper the legitimate use of the library by lawmakers and the courts. As one official protested, "It was not designed as an educational and recreative institution." Added headaches were the mutilation and theft of books and the downright boorishness of visitors. The misbehavior reached a point where in 1860 a letter went to the library committee of the trustees over the signatures of Alfred B. Street, librarian, and his three assistants, Henry A. Homes, Elisha W. Skinner, and John H. Hickcox. They said that "ever since the opening of the Library in the present building, readers have been much molested, especially in the General Library, during the sessions of the Legislature, by persons of disorderly conduct. To correct the evil, the committee has occasionally authorized the employment of a person to preserve order. As the evil continues to the present time, we respectfully request that during the sessions of the Legislature, the committee would appoint a door-keeper to preserve order throughout the Library building and especially in the Hall of the General Library; or to adopt such other plan as shall seem best adapted to the interests of the Institution."

In response to that appeal, the joint library committee of the Legislature asked the trustees to frame rules to fit its recommendation that "the Library during the sessions of the Legislature should be regarded chiefly as an appendage of the Senate and Assembly rooms, and the admission should be confined to the state officers and members of the Legislature, and persons introduced by them." (Twenty-five years later, another librarian noted that "very little use" had been made of a rule debarring students "if their presence was embarrassing.")

Such difficulties must have been acutely discomfiting to the gentle poet, Alfred Street.

However that may be, Street did not waver in his allegiance to the library way of life, probably finding respite in his frequent trips into the mountains. He confided to a friend: "I have not written much lately, not so much as I should have done, but as we grow older our passion for writing declines. Our magazines still offer their pages, and literature is still lovely, but the pen lies more frequently idle than in the first flush of youth."

In any event, Street now had a remarkably capable assistant who had come swiftly to the fore. "A born librarian" and "a genuine bibliophile," he was called by those who knew him. An eulogist afterward said of Henry Homes: "It is no disparagement to his learned and able associates to say, that from the day of his entrance upon his labors in the library in a subordinate capacity, he became its presiding genius. From that day to the day when the hand of death was laid upon him, a period of over thirty years, he guided its policy, inspired its development and directed its energies. As it stands there to-day, it is his eloquent monument."

* * * *

Henry Augustus Homes never had to worry about making a living. With a wealthy Boston merchant for a father, he was able to indulge his scholarly bent to the utmost. A sister of Benjamin Franklin had been in his ancestry and the best schools were open to him. From Phillips Andover Academy, he entered Amherst College at the age of 14. A missionary career evidently was in his mind when, upon graduation, he entered Andover Theological Seminary; then went on to Yale, where he combined a study of medicine with theology and Oriental languages. He later went to Paris where he studied Arabic. Ordained for the ministry, he signed up with the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and was sent to Turkey. This was an adventurous period of Homes' life, when he traveled widely, preaching and teaching among Turks and Arabs. Once he accompanied the noted missionary,

Dr. Asahel Grant, on a perilous expedition into the mountains of Kurdistan, in western Persia.

Finally, in a more quiescent post with the Missionary Board at Constantinople, Dr. Homes made an easy transition into diplomatic service, becoming an interpreter for the American legation and quickly rising to be its chargé d'affaires. Then, unaccountably, a change came over him. In 1853, at the age of 41, he relinquished what looked like a promising new field of action and sailed home to Boston. One year later he was appointed assistant in the New York State Library. Exactly how this drastic turning-point came about is not clear. A former associate said in retrospect: "What fortunate inspiration guided the trustees of our State Library to this faithful but unwearied servant of the Most High, this quiet scholar in his retirement in Boston, we do not know; but certain it is that never was wiser choice made."

Homes brought his wife and son with him to Albany. His first task was the compiling of a catalog of the library. This assignment gave Homes a thorough knowledge of the library's contents. At a later time, when it contained many thousand more volumes, people firmly asserted that Homes was familiar with every book on the shelves.

The policy of printing the entire catalog annually in the Senate Documents was not so illogical as long as the holdings were small; but it had grown uneconomical to say the least. In 1842, for instance, it added 236 pages to the already ponderous Documents. At the suggestion of the library trustees, who said that "very great expense [would be] saved to the State," a law was passed in 1845 to publish the full catalog henceforth only once every 5 years. The 1850 catalog contained 1,100 pages; the 1855 issue was going to be very much larger, and its preparation may have been a factor in the hiring of Henry Homes. He spent more than a year on it, and the catalog was issued in three volumes: one for the General Library, one for the Law Library, the third for maps, engravings, coins, etc. This inventory showed the library in possession of 43,634 books, of which more than 20,000 had been added since 1850.

Henry Homes had found his true metier at last. To quote again: "He entered upon his task in the library in the same spirit of devotion, with the same temperate but unquenchable zeal with which he had carried on the work of christianizing the Orient. He was industrious beyond the industry of younger men. He labored incessantly. . . He had no *avocation*. . . He magnified his office, was content with its labors and satisfied with the rewards which they brought him." It was also said of him that he was "very fixed in his views on all subjects when once formed, although sometimes they were erroneous."

Homes did not exactly replace his superior, Alfred Street. More accurately, the job was split in half. After the move into the new building, the Miscellaneous Library became known as the General Library, and it occupied the second floor. In 1862, Homes was appointed librarian of the General Library, while Street was made librarian of the Law Library. Street remained in the latter post until his retirement in 1868.

* * * *

Meanwhile the Civil War engulfed the Nation, not without repercussions upon the State Library. For one thing, the price of books went up sharply while library funds diminished, so that additions fell off. On the other hand, Secretary of State William H. Seward—who as Governor had taken a special interest in the library—regularly forwarded documents relating to the war and foreign affairs from Washington. The *Speeches of A. Lincoln, President,* were acquired during 1862. The exchanges with Southern states, which had been very well organized, were suspended for the duration of the war and longer. The library report for 1867 said: "The Trustees are happy to state that during the past year they have resumed exchanges with the Southern States."

On April 26, 1865, both the Capitol and the library building were draped in black. At 10 a.m., Governor Reuben E. Fenton, other high-ranking State officials, and both houses of the Legislature convened in the State Library. Solemnly, they proceeded through the corridor into the Capitol to view the remains of the assassinated President. The Lincoln funeral train had paused overnight in Albany and the coffin lay in state in the Assembly Chamber.

Relieved of responsibility for the Law Library, Dr. Homes was able to devote his full energies to the expansion of the General Library. Presumably he had given it the bulk of his own personal library: his name appeared in the 1857 report as donor of a large number of books. With the retirement of Street, Stephen B. Griswold became Homes' close associate as librarian of the Law Library.

Through his judicious and purposeful selection of books—as well as improvements he constantly sought to make in their arranging and accessibility—Homes stamped his individuality upon the library more indelibly than any of his predecessors. It was he who crystallized its character as one of the country's important general reference libraries, particularly in the fields of American and European history.

Had he not been so devoted to the care of books, Homes could have been something of an author in his owr right. A dozen cards bear his name in today's catalog of the library he served so long and so well. He wrote a good deal on Oriental and historical subjects, and translated some Arabic and Persian literary works. Among his titles were: *The Water Supply of Constantinople; The Palatine Emigration to England in 1709; Historical Societies in the United States;* and *The Correct Arms of the State of New York.*

* * * *

The library had been in its own building but four years when the Regents proclaimed: "Its present ratio of increase, continued for a few years, will fill the library building to its utmost capacity." By the end of the Civil War, the State was seriously embarking on a project to construct a new Capitol, and it was expected that room for the State Library would be made in that edifice. An 1865 report of the Board of Regents reflected this hope: "The Trustees would feel impelled to urge the necessity of soon providing enlarged space for the books, and better accommodations for readers, but for the expectation that in the erection of the proposed new Capitol ample provision will be made for the State Library."

There can be no doubt that John V. L. Pruyn was behind that statement. Pruyn had been appointed Chancellor after serving as head of the Regents library committee. He was one of Albany's most influential citizens, the attorney who drew up the incorporation of the New York Central Railroad, and a key figure in the scheme for a new Capitol. Soon he would be a member of the New Capitol Commission at the same time he served as Chancellor, so that the prospects for the library indeed looked bright.

A site for the next statehouse was selected a trifle to the westward of the old Capitol and the library, both of which would ultimately have to be demolished to clear the grounds for a Capitol Park. Excavation for the new Capitol was begun late in 1867, and in that year the library's shelves overflowed and temporary bookcases began to be used. These were to be added to "until more ample accommodations are furnished in the proposed new Capitol." The State acquired a three-story brick dwelling-house next door to the library as a stop-gap. In it were installed the offices of the Board of Regents, and the remainder of the building, even to the basement—black with coal dust—was used to store duplicate materials.

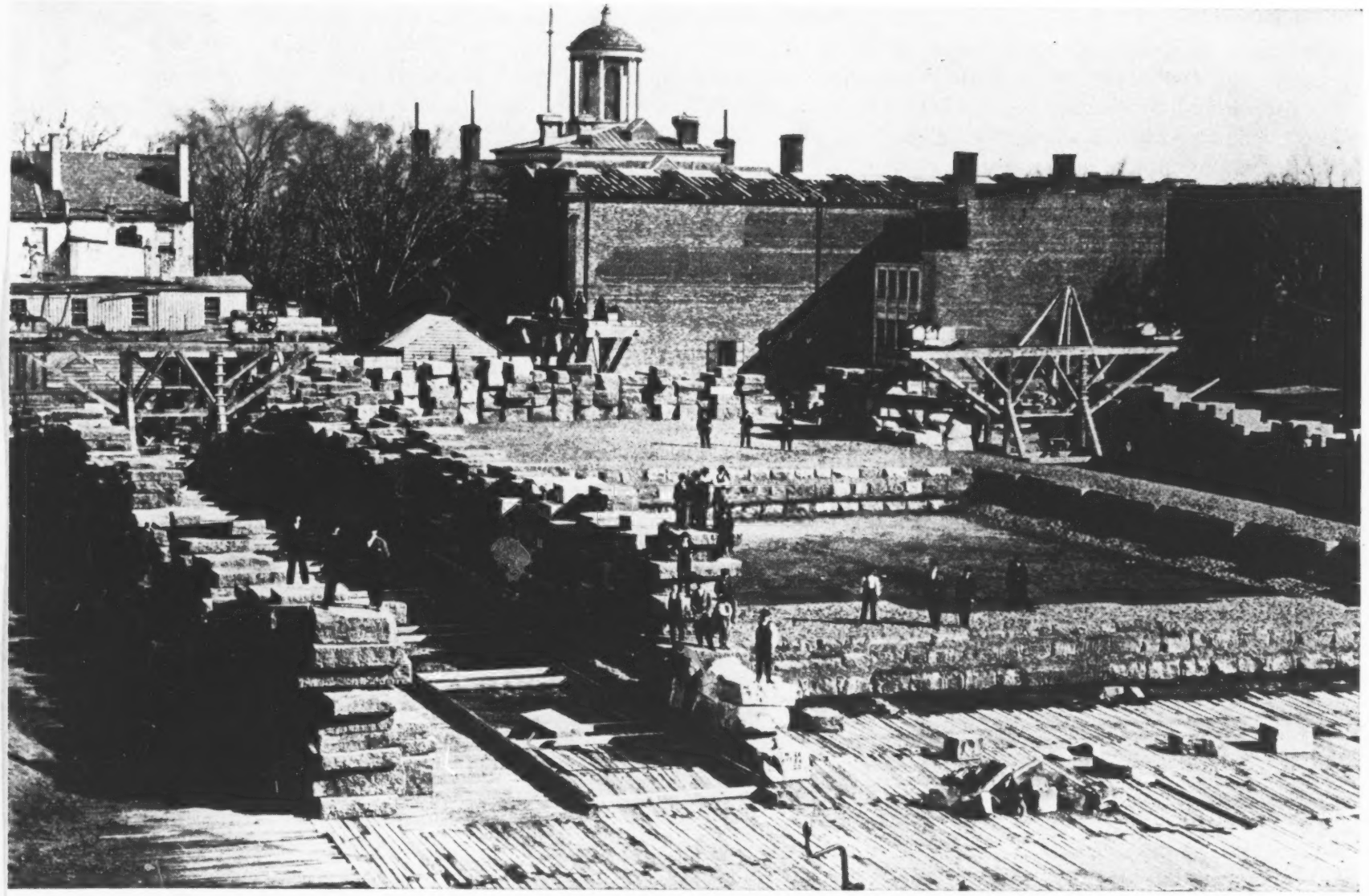
As another interim measure, the Legislature allowed money for more shelving in the library. These shelves, built to the ceiling of the lofty reading rooms, were quickly filled, then widened to permit double rows of books. By 1872, the new Capitol had been raised only slightly above its massive foundation walls, and the Regents reported on the desperate condition of the State Library:

> The commissioners of the new Capitol have found it necessary to remove the building adjacent to the library and which has for several years been occupied for its use, and in fact made a part of it. It was used for offices and working-room, and contained a large number of duplicates and State documents, and the legislative papers. . . The contents of this building have been removed to the library. To make room for them, the north entrance has been closed and the stairway filled with books. From the east gallery of the general library the cases of coins, medals, etc., have been removed to the main floor, and the gallery is fully occupied; not the shelves only, but also the floor. The north end of the law library has been taken for an office and a packing room. The present condition of things cannot continue during the time which must elapse before the library is removed to the new Capitol, and it is earnestly hoped that the Legislature will make provision for necessities which are constantly becoming more pressing.

Time went on, the granite ramparts within a pebble's throw of the State Library grew with maddening slowness, and in 1878 the library trustees said: "Books are placed in double rows on the shelves, and all available space is full. No department of the State has more pressing need of the completion of the New Capitol than the State Library." In 1879 (the year in which the Legislature occupied one section of the far-from-completed structure), Henry Homes complained that elephant folios and newspapers were piled in the alcoves of the galleries and in the cellar. Some space for book storage had been found, he said, in the old Capitol, probably due to its evacuation by the Legislature.

At that stage, the Capitol blueprints still called for the State Library to occupy the upper two floors across the front of the vast structure. The original architect, Thomas Fuller, had so designed it. Fuller was dismissed in 1876, supplanted by a team of two New York architects, Leopold Eidlitz and H. H. Richardson, who began to alter the basic style of the building from Italian Renaissance to Romanesque. The library committee met with Eidlitz, and found him "agreeable" to adapting the space to the library's needs.

In the plans, the main Library Hall was to be 290 feet long, two stories (50 feet) high, 47 feet wide, and divided into five compartments by four arches. Library quarters would be extended 50 feet further at each end by north and south "pavilions" (i.e., tower rooms).



Construction of a new State Capitol was begun in 1869 and the plans provided commodious quarters for the State Library. This progress photo shows the foundation walls rising. The library building and the old Capitol beyond it may be seen in the background.

Homes said the architect told him that the Library Hall "will be the most attractive room in the building, and it is believed in the world"; and that, partly because of the splendid views commanded by its windows, it would be "a favorite place of resort at all seasons of the year." Homes didn't take to the idea that the library should be "a lounge attractive to wandering visitors"; or that it ought to become "the home of architectural ornament, rather than the room where the books are stored." "How much of an object is it," he asked, "to be able to say that one has the most magnificent library hall in the country, if as a consequence the hall is rendered most inconvenient and ill adapted to its proper use?"

A revised set of regulations for the conduct of the library had been in contemplation for some time, and this, too, was held in abeyance pending the move. Library usages had changed enormously in the 60 years since the State Library was founded. The trustees felt the time was ripe for an appraisal of where the library stood and whither it was trending. Homes was asked to make such a study, and submitted his report in January, 1878, under title of: *The Future Development of the New York State Library*. In essence, he posed the question whether the library should knuckle under to the popular demand—that is, be enlarged as "an encyclopedic and universal library"—or continue trying to be a reference library along certain specialized lines. He noted the "prominent and overshadowing use of the Library for trivial ends," and said: "If it should be the conclusion of the Trustees and of the legislative authorities that the Library while managed as a reference

library, is at the same time to be managed as a popular library, it would be necessary to have it conformed to the aims of one. If it is to be virtually an educational institution, a people's college, it should be administered in a manner commensurate with the object, and to bring credit and honor to the state. . . ."

The Homes report was referred to a select committee of the trustees, which in turn decided: "To make this a universal or encyclopedic library is simply out of the question. . . . It seems to your committee that anything in the nature of a popular use of the library for general and indiscriminate reading is quite inconsistent with the ends and purposes of the library, as well as with its manning and equipment, thus far provided by the Legislature."

Homes had won his point. The committee also felt that the transfer into the new Capitol would "give an excellent occasion for a complete and careful revision of the entire system of management of the library, so as to conform it to the practice of the best modern libraries."

The Golden Corridor, with Moorish-Saracenic decorative effects, was designed by Leopold Eidlitz as a showpiece of the new Capitol. It became for several years the cramped home of the Law Library because the State Library was compelled to move in before its new quarters were ready.

9. 'Cribbed, Coffined, and Confined'

The delays and chronic political vicissitudes which beset construction of the new Capitol were reflected upon the State Library. Year by year its "longing expectations" were frustrated. An especially stunning blow was delivered by the august judges of the State's highest court, in a display of something suspiciously akin to temperament.

When a building appropriation was sliced in half because of a veto, the Capitol Commission was forced to trim its sails, and it rushed to completion only the Assembly section, or North Center, in time to be received by the 1879 Legislature. The magnificent Assembly Chamber, with its daring vaulted stone ceiling, was on the third floor. On the level below it was a fine oak-paneled courtroom designed by Eidlitz for the Court of Appeals. This courtroom opened upon the so-called Golden Corridor, a long passageway linking the east and west flanks of the Capitol. The Golden Corridor was an architectural nonesuch which might have been an Arabian Nights setting, its ceiling and walls Orientally bedizened in gorgeous colors. Immediately it became a sight-seeing attraction second only to the Assembly Chamber.

Since the Senate Chamber would not be ready for occupancy for at least another 2 years, the Senate made do with the Court of Appeals courtroom until then. The library went on trusting that some attention would be given to its lodgings as soon as the Senate quarters were finished. The bad news was broken by Governor Alonzo B. Cornell in his 1882 message:

> The Judges of the Court of Appeals express dissatisfaction with the apartments designed for their use, and seem unwilling to occupy them at present. They desire to have rooms set apart for them in another quarter of the building, and have indicated a preference for a portion of the space originally intended for the State Library. It is believed that a change in the location of the library to the west end of the edifice would be quite satisfactory to the authorities having charge of the Library; which would afford opportunity for the change desired by the Court of Appeals. This, however, involves such a radical alteration in the plans of the building heretofore adopted, that legislative sanction would seem first to be necessary.

Actually, the library had no choice in the matter. What the Court of Appeals wanted, the Court of Appeals got. The Legislature obliged, and H. H. Richardson went to work on an elegant courtroom in part of the third-floor-front which had been set aside for the State Library. The location of the library was switched from the east to the west side of the Capitol on the third and fourth floors, plus attic space. Besides a major redrafting of architectural plans, this meant dismantling a fair amount of structural work already done.

It was now 15 years since the State Library had been promised a new home, and its troubles were by no means over.

A reform-minded Governor, Grover Cleveland, took office in 1883, and one of his aims was to get the lagging Capitol finished. To that end, he induced the Legislature to abolish the old Capitol Commission and replace it with a single Commissioner of the Capitol with full powers. Governor Cleveland filled the new post by appointing Isaac G. Perry from Binghamton, a builder-architect of excellent repute. His optimistic instruction to Perry was to round off the building in three years.

Issac Perry got things moving, and then, on July 13, 1883, notified the Board of Regents as follows:

"Gentlemen—In order to progress with the work on the New Capitol building to advantage and with economy, it has become necessary to remove the State Library building, which I have determined to do. Rooms in the New Capitol building for the reception of the library, which I will cause to be fitted up in a suitable manner, have been assigned. . . The removal of the library to be completed on or before the first day of October next."

In effect, this was an eviction notice, allowing the library two months and a half in which to vacate. At that moment, the number of volumes in its keeping was around 126,600.

To what rooms in the Capitol? The answer was: the original Court of Appeals courtroom, rejected by the judges; and the Golden Corridor. Perry had shelving installed. The General Library was to be jammed into the courtroom and the Law Library into the corridor. Perry assured the Regents and Henry Homes that the library's sojourn in these makeshift lodgings would be "temporary," that the permanent quarters ought to be finished during the summer of 1884. A fresh appropriation of $250,000 was in hand, earmarked for completion of the new courtroom and the space assigned to the library.

Perry inserted an advertisement in the newspapers: "The State Library Building for Sale." He invited sealed proposals, saying: "Parties purchasing the same are to take down the building and remove the materials, including the debris, from the premises on or before the 15th day of November, 1883." The winning bids for demolition of both the library and the old Capitol were put in by James W. Eaton, who had been building superintendent of the new Capitol until Perry's arrival.

Enthusiastically, Isaac Perry—a stalwart, white-whiskered man already past 60—set about his task. It was no part of his intention to place the State Library in a sad predicament; on the contrary, he thought to speed up its occupancy of what was to be the handsomest home of any library in the United States. It was going to be his first unalloyed personal handiwork in the Capitol; all else was carrying out the previous designs of Eidlitz and Richardson. At the same time, Perry began erection of the great Western (later called the Million-Dollar) Stairway, which was to provide a spectacular approach to the library's main entrance.

The move into the new Capitol was achieved "with a promptness, judgment and system which are notable," even if it did not meet Perry's timetable. The exodus of the Law Library began September 28 and took 9 days; that of the General Library began October 1 and consumed 25 days. Needless to say, the courtroom and the corridor could not contain everything that came. Many books went helter-skelter into adjoining rooms. Hundreds of volumes of old newspapers had previously been stacked in the new Capitol office of George W. Clinton, Vice Chancellor of the Board of Regents, who was at work on the Clinton Papers. Duplicates and documents were stored in the dungeon-like basement of the Capitol, where they were vulnerable to damage.

The librarians adjusted themselves to making the best of a bad situation, in the belief that it would be for less than a year, and that then a virtual paradise would be their reward. Both they and Perry were in for a rude awakening.

* * * *

The fickle winds of politics soon stymied the best efforts of Perry, as Grover Cleveland, after 2 years at Albany, moved on to the White House. A radically reduced appropriation compelled Perry to lay off 725 men. He had managed to complete the walls of the west section of the Capitol and get a roof over them, and that was about all. By January, 1886, Dr. Homes dubiously reported: ". . . the library remains in its temporary quarters, and is likely to continue in the same rooms for one or two years longer, so far as can be judged from the indications." His estimate was shy of the mark. For two years the Legislature made no appropriation at all for the Capitol, and work halted.

In February 1888, a correspondent of *The New York Times* dwelt at length on the sorry plight of the State Library, saying it had been "cribbed, coffined, and confined in quarters never intended and entirely unsuited for it." (Macbeth's actual phrase was: "But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined . . ."). The article went on: "The State of New York has the finest library of any State in the Union. . . The manner in which this treasure is sheltered is a curiosity in the treatment of great libraries, a disgrace to the State, and a triumph in the art of cheese-paring practiced spasmodically by the Legislature."

The "reading-room" of the General Library at this time consisted of an aisle 10 feet wide on one side of the courtroom, and it had exactly six small tables. The Golden Corridor, with the Law Library stacked along its length, continued to be visited for its much-publicized beauty and to be used as a connecting thoroughfare. The razing of the old library building had made it necessary to suspend binding and to store the machinery. Exchanges, both domestic and foreign, were practically suspended due to the inaccessibility of duplicates in the basement, where heat was slowly ruining them.

To worsen this dreary situation the library was overshadowed by a real physical danger. Fissures had been appearing in the grand stone ceiling of the Assembly Chamber, and finally pieces of rock began to fall. Cracks also appeared in the stonework of the Golden Corridor. Periodic examinations and recommendations were made. Finally, in January, 1888, Leopold Eidlitz, the architect of the Assembly Chamber, wrote to Governor David B. Hill: ". . . we deem it our duty to respectfully protest against the further occupancy of the north wing of the Capitol in its present condition; and we request that you will direct that the Assembly Chamber, the State Library and the offices in that part of the building, be closed until definite action . . . shall have been taken."

The Assembly vacated its chamber for a couple of weeks while the ceiling was shored up with planking so that the session could be held in safety. That summer the groined stone ceiling was replaced by a flat wooden one. And, shortly after the library was given its rightful place, the fancy stonework of the Golden Corridor was removed and it became a prosaic series of offices.

The dilemma of the library was brought to a head at the same time as the problem of the Assembly ceiling. The Board of Regents ran out of patience and presented a strongly worded protest to the Legislature.

After outlining in detail the situation of the past 5 years, the reduction of the library's services, the deterioration to which the books were being subjected, the Regents concluded:

"We would respectfully but earnestly urge that the question of the conservation of the treasures of the State Library by completing the rooms for their reception, a question which cannot be postponed without injury to the library, may be treated wholly apart from considerations which may probably affect other work upon the building, and that the reasonable sum which is required for the proper completion of the library rooms may be appropriated without delay."

* * * *

This brought action. The Legislature passed a bill making a specific appropriation of $147,260 for finishing up the library rooms, including ironwork in the stacks, and to cover fixtures and furniture.

Unfortunately, Dr. Homes, who had suffered through the ordeal, was not around to see the consummation.

The devoted librarian of the General Library became seriously ill with Bright's disease during 1886, and was seldom in the library after that. The next annual report of the trustees noted that: "The want of Dr. Homes' experience and activity has been most severely felt." One of the assistants, George R. Howell, was made acting librarian in his stead. The Albany *Time*s reported that "he rode out some time after his obituary was published in some of the papers." But death overtook him on November 3, 1887. He had set a record for duration of service to the library, 33 years. The Board of Regents paid him this tribute:

> The trustees desire to express their great grief at the loss which the state has sustained, and their appreciation of the fidelity and ability with which he fulfilled his responsible duties. Since his death the trustees have received from all parts of the United States, and from European libraries, expressions of grief at the death of one who had come to be recognized as one of the chief librarians of the world.

The Regents felt it would be "unwise" to take any steps toward filling the vacancy caused by Homes' death until the library moved into its new accommodations, and so Howell continued as acting librarian. A native Long Islander, Howell had been in earlier life both a teacher and a clergyman, and somewhat resembled Homes in the fact that he turned to library work relatively late and then became deeply attached to it.

George R. Howell served as acting State librarian for two years following the death of Henry Homes. Later, as archivist, he was very instrumental in establishing the Manuscripts and History Section.

George Rogers Howell was born at Southhampton in 1833 and graduated from Yale in 1854. After a period of teaching, he turned to the ministry, for which he qualified at Princeton Theological Seminary. While filling a ministry in Western New York, he was invited to deliver the oration for the 225th anniversary of the settlement of his hometown, Southampton. So well received was the address that it was published under title: *The Early History of Southampton, Long Island.* This experience convinced Howell that what he really wanted to be was a historical researcher and writer, and he had a number of books and pamphlets of that nature printed. An offer from the State Library to join its staff was accepted in 1872, and he assisted greatly with the editing of the colonial and other historical documents. He was co-author and co-editor (with Jonathan Tenney) of the *Bicentennial History of Albany and Schenectady Counties* published in 1886.

After his 2 years as acting librarian, Howell continued to serve the State Library as archivist until his death in 1899.

As the time neared for putting the finishing touches on the library's new domicile, the Regents looked about for an expert to give them advice. They found such a person in an energetic young man who was librarian at Columbia College, and appointed him in 1888 on a temporary basis as consulting librarian. His name was Melvil Dewey.

10. A Turn of the Page

With relief and a surge of optimism, the library staff bade adieu to the Golden Corridor late in 1889 and moved upstairs, though the new quarters were incomplete. Finishing touches, in fact, would be going on for some time to come. Librarians would get on terms of friendly badinage with construction men, and the dust of carpentry and stone-carving would settle over books on their shelves.

In spite of such drawbacks, it was a happy day. For the first time the library had a prodigal amount of room. Anyone could see that the space was going to be resplendent almost to the point of ostentation.

The physical setting was but half the story. If ever a library could be described as embarking upon a voyage of lively, and sometimes stormy, adventure, this was it. Moving into its eighth decade, the State Library, without yet suspecting it, was about to chart revolutionary pathways, not merely for itself but for libraries everywhere. The modern age of library science was dawning on Capitol Hill in Albany.

Melvil Dewey, the consultant from Columbia, viewed the surroundings and told the press: "Splendid as are the Assembly Chamber and the Senate Chamber, I predict that the visitors to the Capitol in the future, on completing their sight-seeing about the building, will declare that the rooms occupied by the State Library are the handsomest they have seen. As rooms for a library they surpass those of any other library in the world in beauty. I give that testimony after visiting all the great libraries of Europe and the United States." (Dewey was lately back from a tour abroad, inspecting the best libraries of England, Scotland, and Paris, including the world's two greatest: the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Library of the British Museum.)

The New York *Tribune* added to this a commentary of its own: "Other librarians who are competent to express a judgment on such a matter, it is believed, will say that the library, as the result of Mr. Dewey's work, is one of the most scientifically arranged in the world. It will be emphatically a modern library; with the most recent inventions for the rapid and economic handling of books, and with cosey [sic] reading rooms for students."

Once the hurdle of legislative neglect was passed, so much earnest thought, care, and ornamentation were lavished upon the library's haven as to suggest an effort to over-compensate for the trials it had sustained. Isaac Perry took more than ordinary pride in what he did there. The free hand allowed him is the more surprising when it is known, in retrospect, that the place in the Capitol was never intended to be the permanent home of the library. We find printed testimony, in a State Library report only 7 years after it took occupancy, saying: "It was common to remark at the time that these rooms would be needed by state departments, and that when the Capitol was finished there must of course be a new library building." (The Capitol was officially declared finished as of January 1, 1899.)

As before noted, the library was assigned the third and fourth floors across the whole western side of the Capitol, except for some office space reserved to the Board of Regents. In order to give it a clean sweep of the third floor, the Regents volunteered to relinquish their niche on that level and took space on the fourth. The library became a neighbor to both the Senate and Assembly Chambers, whose entrances were around corners from it on the third floor. In a north-south line, the over-all length of the library was 300 feet. The space was broken up into 20 rooms, of which 11 were reading rooms. The Law Library was assigned the north end, the General Library the south. For the economical use of space, Perry introduced a series of mezzanine levels and thought them "a happy solution." There were five levels of book-stacks, with iron shelving and stanchions. Woodwork was of quartered oak, and balusters and newels of connecting stairways were ornately carved. At the suggestion of Dewey, even more stack space was obtained by putting mezzanines into the north and south ends of the outside approach corridor, from which access was gained to the legislative chambers.

The central feature, of course, was the main reading room, rising loftily through the two stories. This sumptuous hall was 73 feet long, 42 feet wide, and 56 feet high at the middle of its concave ceiling. It was commensurate in size with the Senate Chamber. It had double tiers of galleries along the sides, and stone archways of Romanesque style, supported by colonnades, at either end. The pillars of the colonnades were of polished red granite, like those in the legislative chambers. Their elaborately carved capitals never repeated the same design twice. The arches, also adorned with carving, were of the same Corsehill freestone, brought from Scotland, which was used in the Great Western Stairway; it was soft for the carvers to work, and later hardened in exposure to air. Perry saw to it that there

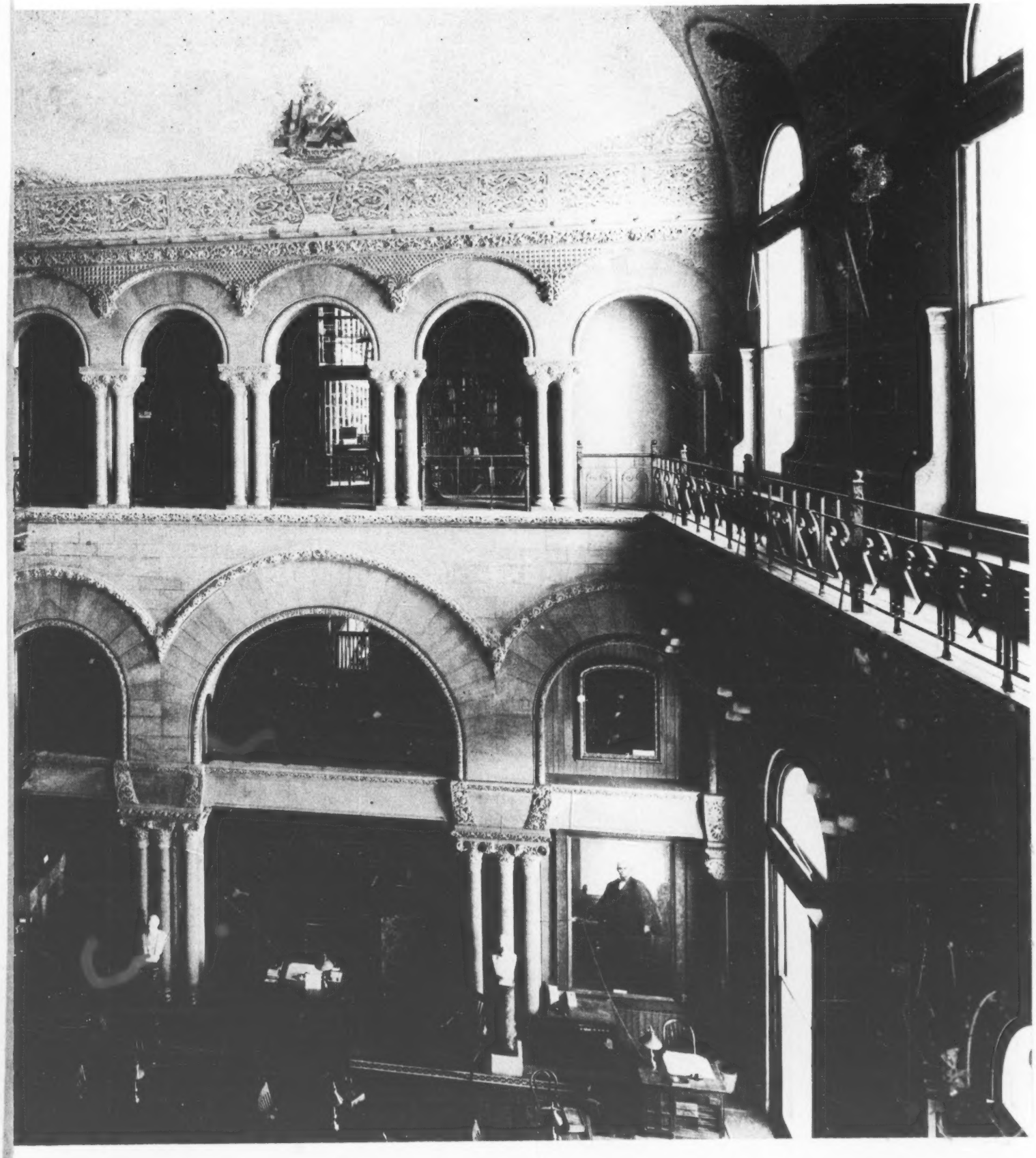
was plenty of light by cutting large windows through the east wall and attic roof. By putting in air shafts, he provided the library with what was said to be the best ventilation in the Capitol: he believed that good air facilitated good reading.

The floor of the main reading room was of red tile with variegated borders; that of subsidiary rooms was of oaken parquetry. The curved ceiling was painted with "delicate allegorical designs." Cupids floated among garlands of roses in a blue summer's sky. Around the margins were symbols of science and art, and portraits of Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe, Schiller, Byron, and Longfellow.

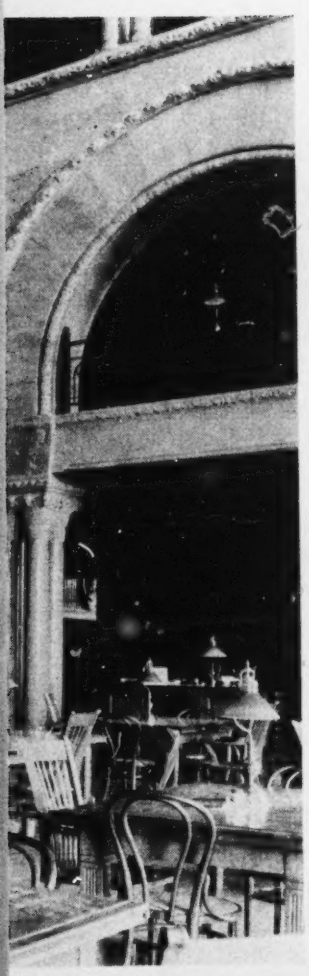
The Commissioner of the Capitol had a strong taste for stonecarving as an embellishment for buildings. He had assembled a choice group of virtuoso carvers who were at work on a famous gallery of human heads on the Western Stairway. Some of these carvers he turned loose on the State Library. On the transom above the entrance they carved the head of Minerva, Roman goddess of wisdom. On either side of the doorway materialized the heads of Shakespeare and Homer.

Inside the entrance, the first thing the visitor encountered was the loan desk, pictured as "one of the most elaborate and beautiful pieces of oak carving in the Capitol." Forty speaking tubes radiated from the loan desk to various locations; their mouthpieces were enclosed, in the interest of silence, in a closet of carved oak and glass. After a few years, desk telephones replaced the tubes. Electric clocks were installed, but they didn't work satisfactorily and self-winding clocks were soon substituted. Carpets were laid in the galleries having parquetry floor to deaden the sound of footsteps. There was one passenger elevator inside the library to communicate with the higher levels. Several hand elevators served to deliver books from the stacks. Soon the library was receiving an average of 1,000 visitors daily, mostly sight-seers.

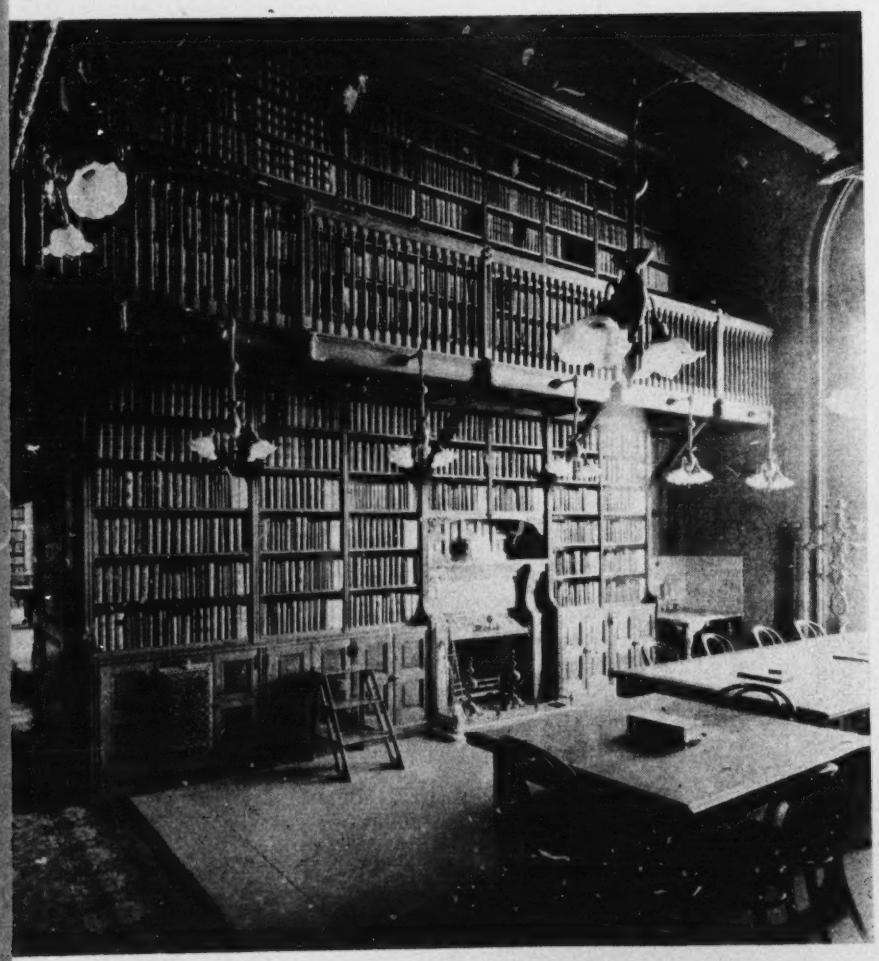
Whitelaw Reid, publisher of the New York *Tribune,* was a member of the Board of Regents and of the standing committee on the library. It was Reid who made the overture to Melvil Dewey about coming to Albany for his advice on reorganization of the library at the time of the move. Undoubtedly, Reid must have been aware that Dewey was at odds with the trustees of Columbia College. At this very time, Governor Hill was striving to get the Board of Regents abolished; he hammered the theme in four successive messages ("I think there is no necessity for the official existence of the Board of Regents"). While Dewey was looking over the library's situation, he also canvassed the State's educational system in general, by request of the Regents.



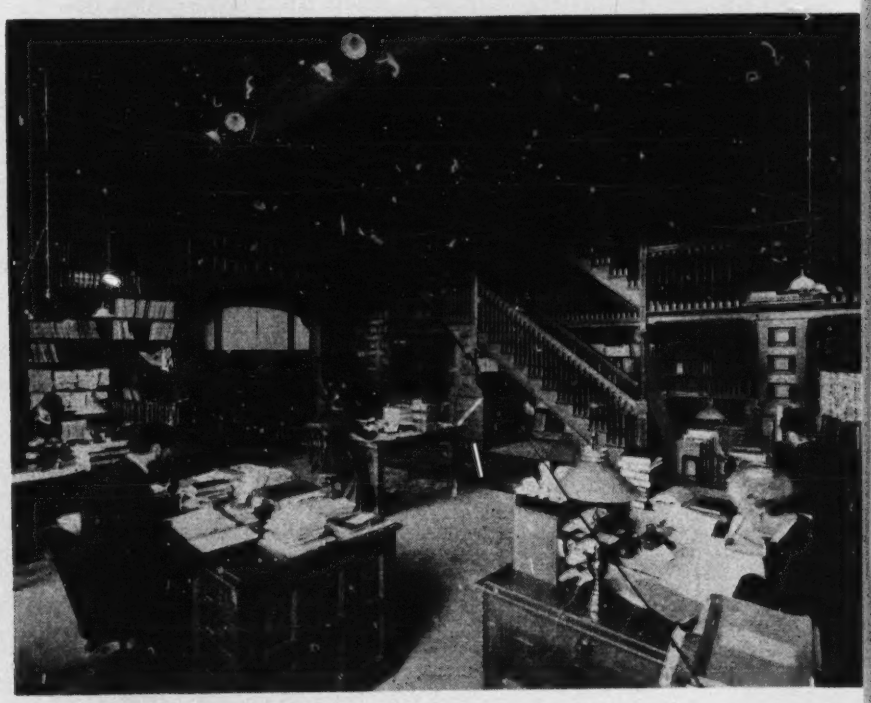
Central reading room of the State Library in the new Capitol. The view is from the upper gallery, looking south. The elaborate stone carving insisted upon by Isaac Perry, the last resident architect of the Capitol, is seen to advantage. The arches are in Romanesque style, the pillars of polished red granite. The portrait at lower right is of Chancellor John V. L. Pruyn, who as a Regent was very instrumental in the development of the library.



The southeastern corner of the central reading room. The main entrance doors, leading from the Great Western Staircase of the Capitol, are at left. In the center of the picture are the telephone closet, for quiet communication with other rooms, and the card catalog.



Another subsidiary reading room which illustrates the wood carving and paneling, the split levels and stairways. Note that the glass-plate negative from which this print was made had been cracked diagonally through the middle.



Among Dewey's recommendations was a complete reorganization of the State Library's methods, making it "the very best working legislative library," as well as "a center for training competent librarians." He sketched a glowing and ambitious program, perhaps envisioning himself as the rightful person to carry it through.

On December 12, 1888, the Board of Regents elected Dewey not only director of the State Library but also secretary of the Regents, a position which carried with it the duties of finance officer of the Board. The salary was $5,000. Curiously, Dewey received his pay check as secretary of the Board of Regents; technically, he served the library at first without recompense. He submitted his resignation to Columbia on December 20.

Melvil Dewey was a most unusual and remarkable man. At this time 37 years of age, he wore a pointed black beard, had black hair and piercing black eyes behind his spectacles, and was a veritable powerhouse of energy. It was said that he worked at his desk with a kind of "furious quiet." Certainly he was original, probably in some respects a genius. At the same time he was an eccentric and a bit of a fanatic—who kept himself in a straightjacket of almost inhuman self-discipline; who abhorred alcohol and tobacco; who carried on lifelong crusades of reform in the fields of metric measure and simplified spelling; and who was almost perpetually involved in some clash of personalities. Like him or dislike him, there can be no argument with the statement that what he did for the New York State Library was monumental. Around the globe today, wherever there is a library the name of Melvil Dewey is known.

When this singular individual was born in 1851, Louis Kossuth, the celebrated Hungarian patriot and statesman, was on a lecture tour of the United States. Joel Dewey, the father, was so ardent an admirer of Kossuth that he christened his youngest son Melville Louis Kossuth Dewey. The birthplace was Adams Center, N.Y., in the North Country near Watertown, where Joel Dewey ran a general store and also a bootmaking shop.

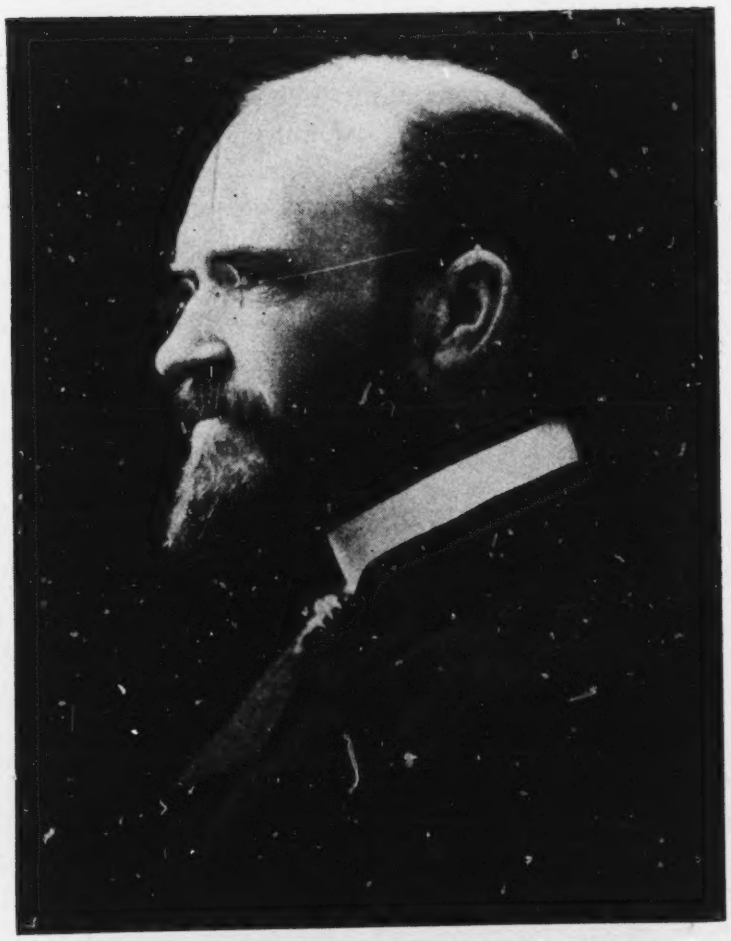
It is part of the Dewey lore that, as a small lad he trudged the 11 miles into Watertown to buy a Webster's dictionary; that he had a passion for system that showed itself in frequently setting his mother's pantry in order; that he induced his father to stop selling tobacco in his store; that the pioneer thriftiness of his parents imbued him with a hatred for waste that never left him and made him a foe of time-wasting—a trait which would prove of some importance to the world when he grew up. The legend also says that, when he was 16, he convinced his father to sell the store by proving to him that it was losing money. The family moved to Oneida.

After teaching in rural schools, this precocious young man enrolled at Alfred University, but transferred to Amherst College, where he studied assiduously and took up horseback riding as a hobby. As an offset to the hint of priggishness implicit in his abiding moralistic scruples, it is pleasant to record that he distinctly liked girls. While a student, he was known to keep two or three dates in the same evening, saying an early goodnight to one young lady so he could pay a call on the next. Conjecturally, his relish for the companionship of women later helped make him the champion of feminism in education.

Even before arriving at Amherst, Dewey had joined the movement for adoption of the European metric system of weights and measures in America; this made him decimal-conscious. Simplified spelling had also captured his interest, and he was the longtime secretary of the Spelling Reform Association. It has been speculated that Dewey's fanaticism on the subject may have done the movement more harm than good, by bringing it into ridicule. As a student, he began writing his letters in simplified spelling, and he often used it in articles for publication. Some of the results he attained bordered on the absurd, and impressed the average reader more as humor (on the Josh Billings order) than as serious effort. "English spelling," he wrote, "is the wurst there is." He began by simplifying his own name to Melvil. When, later on, he tried to simplify the surname to Dui, the Board of Regents demurred. Dropping the "ue" from the word "catalogue" prompted a newspaper to suggest doing the same thing for "glue." He was capable of sentences like this: "Mani can make muni but no one can make tym." And yet some of his word simplifications persisted and have come into common usage. For example, signs say "Thru Traffic" on the New York State Thruway. The name of the Adirondack Loj, a base camp of the Adirondack Mountain Club, is a vestigial Deweyism. The State Library and most dictionaries now prefer "catalog."

During his final 2 years as an Amherst undergraduate, Dewey had part-time employment in the college library and was struck by the disorder and lack of system in which the books were kept. The consequent delay in finding a book struck him as a wicked waste of time. After the first year of library work, he spent his summer vacation traveling about to see how other libraries operated. One of those he visited on this 1873 trip was the New York State Library, of which he noted: "They arrange the books alphabetically, paying no attention to subjects." Of libraries in general, he

from the Dewey Papers at the Columbia University Library.



Melvil Dewey at the time be became librarian of the New York State Library.

was "astounded to find the lack of efficiency and waste of time and money" in their fixed system of cataloging.

Back at college, Dewey fell to figuring how to make the Amherst library more systematic—thinking no further than Amherst, at the time. He conceived that the first essential was the greatest possible simplicity. He said the solution finally smote him while in church listening to a long sermon "without hearing a word." It was the use of numerals as decimals. "I jumpt in my seat," Dewey recalled. He went home and prepared a memorandum to the Amherst Library Committee:

"Select the main classes, not to exceed nine, and represent each class by one of the (10 digits) nine significant figures. Subdivide each of these main heads into not more than nine subordinate classes. . . Sub-classify each. . . The system is easily understood and applies equally well to a library of a hundred volumes or of a million, it being capable of indefinite and accurate growth."

Thus was born the famed Dewey Decimal System, which came in time to be almost universally used by libraries. The Library Committee approved the idea, and Dewey set about reclassifying the Amherst library, with the help of his friend, Walter Stanley Biscoe, and several members of the faculty. He "forced all human knowledge into ten groups," it was said. The system evolved under these headings: 1, philosophy; 2, religion; 3, sociology; 4, philology; 5, natural science; 6, useful arts; 7, fine arts; 8, literature; 9, history. Under the cipher (0) were grouped general works belonging to no special class, such as encyclopedias and periodicals.

The Dewey System was given a 3-year trial at Amherst before it crystallized into printed form as a book. The book went through edition after edition and grew from 42 pages to nearly 2,000; it is still published in constantly updated editions by the Forest Press, a foundation-owned institution at Lake Placid. The merits of the system were quickly recognized and it created a revolution in library procedures, although the costliness of reorganizing a large existing library made its adoption gradual.

In 1876 Dewey moved into Boston to promote library reform work, and helped to found the American Library Association, of which he was elected secretary. Two years later, he took a wife: Annie Godfrey, who was librarian of Wellesley College. In 1883 he was appointed librarian of Columbia College, with the responsibility for integrating various small, scattered libraries on that campus into one central library. This presented an ideal situation for installing the Decimal System, so that Columbia's became the second library to have it.

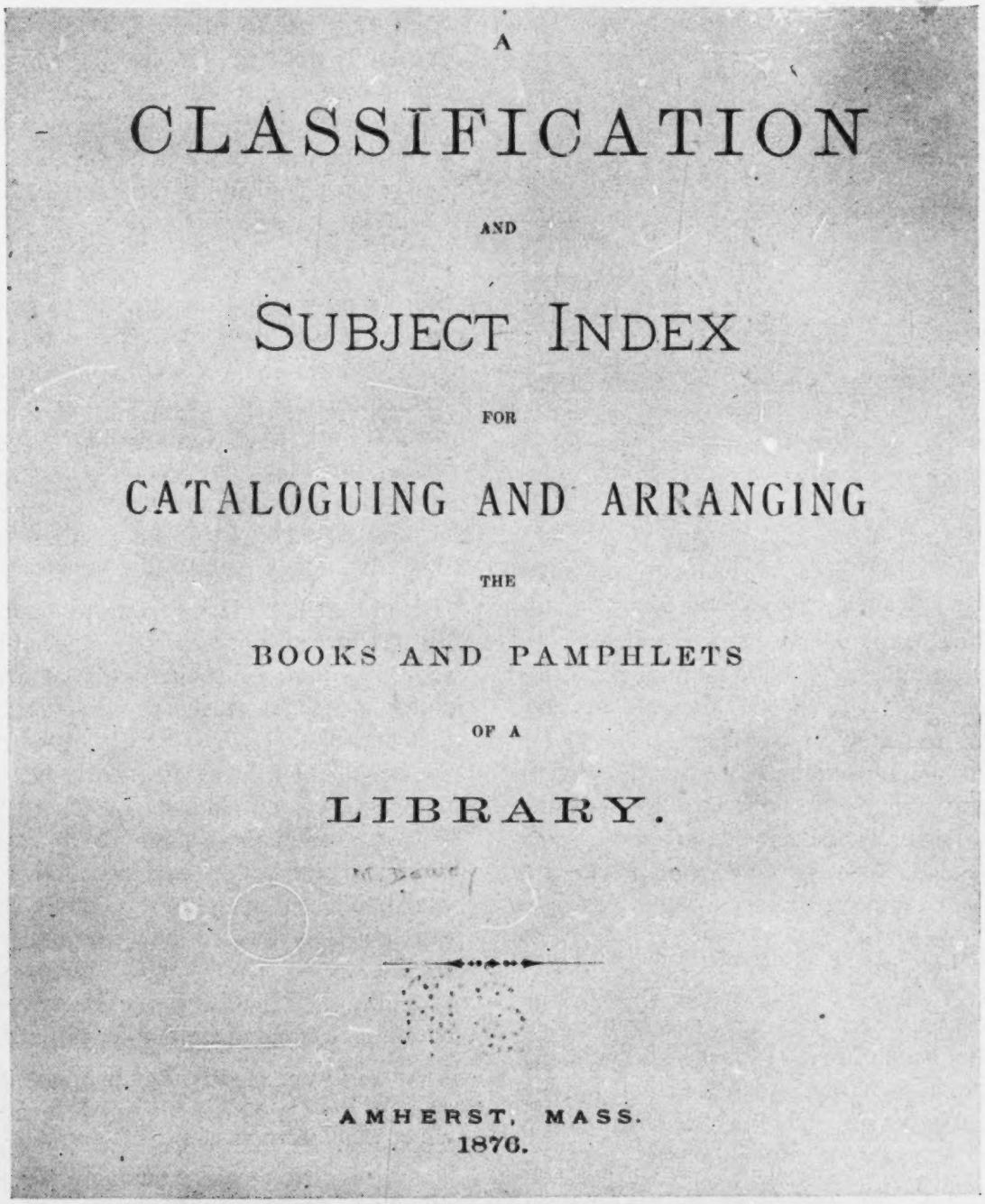
It did not take Dewey long to demonstrate his talent for getting into hot water. Convinced that library work should be done by trained professionals, on a par with college-educated teachers, Dewey started the world's first library school on the Columbia campus in 1887: the School of Library Economy. He opened the small school to women students—a liberty which was taboo at Columbia in those days. Doubtless he had the connivance of the college president, Dr. F. A. P. Barnard, who had been trying unsuccessfully to have a course for women introduced. Now Barnard was striving for a compromise— an "Annex" for women off-campus. (Barnard died the same year Dewey moved to Albany, but his idea came to fruition in Barnard College.)

At any rate, Dewey was conducting classes for women on the Columbia campus in open defiance of tradition and the college trustees. The Albany offer came in the nick of time, presumably, to save him from a more open battle with Columbia. The governing board of Columbia obviously wanted no part of his library school, and so he brought it to Albany with him.

The fluid condition of the State Library presented another gilt-edged opportunity for installing the Decimal System. His old Amherst friend, Walter Biscoe, joined him and was placed in charge of cataloging.

In his report as director of the library in January, 1893, Dewey said the library was still "embarrassed from unfinished quarters," but that carpets, for reducing noise, had been put down on the stairs and laid along the "300 feet of vista through which the crowds of visitors march in almost endless succession." He said:

"As the library is known to be the most beautiful part of the famous Capitol, even the rights of readers to absolute quiet have not seemed sufficient to justify shutting the main rooms. . . It is fairly the part of a great library so magnificently housed to impress chance visitors with the dignity and importance of such collections. There must be a distinct though small educational value to many thousand visitors each year in seeing what intellectual riches New York State provides for its citizens and how nobly it has installed them, as if in recognition of their importance to the welfare of the commonwealth."


A

CLASSIFICATION

AND

SUBJECT INDEX

FOR

CATALOGUING AND ARRANGING

THE

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

OF A

LIBRARY.

AMHERST, MASS.
1876.

Title page of the original edition of Melvil Dewey's book on the decimal system of classification which he did for the Amherst College library.

11. 'Strange Combativ Years'

With the aid of a mortgage, the Deweys purchased a large house in Albany at 315 Madison Avenue, not far from Washington Park which was laced with carriage drives and bridle paths. The doors of this house were always open to students of the Library School.

Ever a zealot for physical fitness, Dewey was quick to adopt the safety bicycle as an instrument of exercise when it came on the market around 1890. The stretch of street between his home and the park was bumpy with cobblestones, and so he brought influence to bear on the city government to get asphalt pavement.

Not only did Dewey ride strenuously himself; he preached the joys and benefits of cycling to the library staff, to students, and to all friends who would listen. Few library employees made enough money to afford a bicycle. Their boss purchased five extra bicycles for the use of the staff people; then he hatched the system of letting them buy machines from him on the installment plan. Students of the Library School boarded in various parts of town where it was impossible for them to keep bikes, and there was no parking place for them at the Capitol. Consequently Dewey built a "handsome wheel house" in his garden, opening into the new asphalt street. It contained racks for 20 bicycles, and was equipped with repair tools and a tire pump.

From the installment plan it was a simple step to fishing for discounts from the bicycle companies. Dewey wrote a form letter to three or four leading manufacturers, pointing out that he would probably be purchasing about 20 bicycles annually, to be passed on to his students and staff; that he "preferred to buy one, or at best two, makes exclusively—the best." He said he had noticed that the wheel he rode was "sure to be bought by a number of others in the University," and by people who "rode with us." The letter stated that he had over 100 persons engaged in desk work under him, and he felt they needed exercise; that he had found cycling helped him and gave him a better capacity for work. Moreover, he argued that many Library School graduates would "carry back to their homes the wheels they have ridden here, thus introducing them to a new section." He claimed to have introduced a number of college professors, clergymen, and other educated persons to cycling—"and more than a score of educated women of social standing." What response, if any, he received in the way of discounts does not appear.

The purchase of the house and the promotion of bicycling were two of the things which Dewey's political enemies tried to use against him during an investigation by a legislative committee in 1895. It was hinted that he could not have bought so large a house without some clandestine source of income. He submitted documents proving that the house was mortgaged to the eaves. He was accused of buying bicycles at wholesale price and selling them to employees and students at a tidy profit for himself. He showed that he had only made it convenient for his people to purchase bicycles on the installment plan instead of in a lump sum. Still another sin with which he was charged was requiring Library School students to purchase *Decimal Classification* as a textbook when he was personally involved in its publication; he proved that he had given the books to the students.

From *Melvil Dewey. Seer: Inspirer: Doer.*
Courtesy of Lake Placid Club Education Foundation.

The home at 315 Madison Avenue, Albany, purchased by Dewey when he moved to town.

The subcommittee which ran the hearings concluded: "It will clearly appear, as your committee believes, that not a single charge involving the integrity and official conduct of the accused was sustained. . . . In weighing all the testimony . . . no other result could be reached by the committee than that the charges were not only not sustained, but that by the means and spirit in which they were brought and persistently prosecuted, they were vexatious, frivolous and detrimental to public interests."

The exercise of driving the tricycle on good roads is positively delightful, and I find it a decided benefit to my health. There is nothing like it to bring back the gleeful experiences of boyish spirits. Then there is the very great convenience of using the machine for short trips about town. It is always ready for a start, and one can mount and run off a mile or two on it in the time it would take to harness a horse.—*J. T. Trowbridge.*

THE LIBRARIAN'S HORSE.

HEALTH, BUSINESS, PLEASURE, EXERCISE.

COLUMBIA

BICYCLES AND TRICYCLES.

Highest Grade of Machines Made.

The test of the roads for eight years has not worn out a single Columbia.—Their riders hold the best world's records.—In majority at every League Meet.—Almost invariably ridden by long-distance tourists.—Every part interchangeable.

CATALOGUE SENT FREE.

THE POPE MANUFACTURING CO.,

597 Washington Street, BOSTON.

Branch Houses: 12 Warren St., New York; 115 Wabash Ave., Chicago.

For a summer trip, "a bicycle trip" gives more real solid pleasure to the square inch than any other recreation. One depends on neither cars nor carriages. He is his own horse as he wheels over hill and valley in a grand go-as-you-please-stop-when-you-want-to-and-come-back-when-you-feel-like-it vacation; and then to come home feeling good all over, mind clear, body vigorous, ready for business and able to work.—*Tainter's Guide Books.*

This advertisement appeared in the June, 1887, issue of Library Notes, *journal of the American Library Association, which was edited by Melvil Dewey. It suggests his adoption of cycling as a hobby even before he left New York City.*

Underlying the anti-Dewey activities was a deep cleavage in the State's educational structure. As Secretary of the Board of Regents, Dewey was in the thick of the controversy. The system of education had long suffered from a dichotomy between the Board of Regents and the Department of Public Instruction: the Regents having jurisdiction over academic and collegiate education, as well as institutions like the State Library; while the Department was responsible for the public schools. A proposal for unification into a single department was being increasingly agitated, with sharp disagreement over the way in which it was to be done. A sweeping revision of the State's law pertaining to higher education was enacted in 1892, and Dewey took a leading role in its writing. With this step the State Library was definitely and formally made a part of the apparatus of higher education.

* * * *

When Dewey first came on the scene, the superintendent of public instruction at Albany was Dr. Andrew Sloan Draper. Friction arose at once between the two men, Draper being also a strong and opinionated personality. The explosive mixture was cooled down when, in 1892, Draper left to become president of the University of Illinois. But Draper was destined to return as Dewey's superior.

Small wonder that Dewey's biographer, Grosvenor Dawe, spoke of "the strange combativ years in Albany." The author so venerated his subject that he wrote the book in simplified spelling.

As director of the library, Dewey was, in effect, head of the General Library. The two main divisions (i.e., Law and General) were still in force, with Stephen B. Griswold, a bearded and benign man, as law librarian. Griswold's singleminded devotion to his charge was compared to the solicitude of a father for his children. Indeed, he was called the "father of the Law Library." Often he boasted that he had "carried it in his arms three times." When he replaced Street, the Law Library had less than 20,000 volumes; when he rounded out 30 years of service, in 1898, the number had more than tripled. Many of the books were sprinkled with his own notations. Himself a graduate of Albany Law School, Griswold was a particular friend to law students who made use of the Library.

A trend toward added units—new subject libraries within the State Library proper—soon developed, and Dewey accelerated it. In the Laws of 1891 an appropriation of $5,000 was made to provide for the acceptance and care of the medical library of the Albany Medical College, which had been offered for donation. The Medical College felt that its library of 2,500 volumes, plus as many pamphlets, would be more useful as the nucleus for a central medical library whose services would be available to all physicians in the State. Dewey examined the library, found that it contained many large and valuable sets, and recommended its acceptance. The gift came with the understanding that it was to be rapidly enlarged and put on a par with the Law Library; due to lagging appropriations, this promise was long in being fulfilled. The State Medical Society followed up with the donation of its library of 7,346 books and 3,661 pamphlets. An advisory committee of Albany doctors was helpful in the selection of books and the approval of policies and publications. After 10 years, the Medical Library had grown into a serviceable research library on medical subjects.

Antedating even the medical unit as a component library had been Legislative Reference, established in 1890. As its name indicates, this was basically for the assistance of the Legislature and other branches of government, and it took jurisdiction over legislative documents, governmental publications, and the like. Meanwhile the Manuscripts Section, under George Howell as archivist, was evolving into an ever more significant attribute, having become virtually an official public record office and State Archives bureau.

It was logical that education itself should be recognized as a specialty by a library which was identified with the educational system. Dewey ordered all books on education assembled in a separate Education Alcove; this was the first step toward today's Education Library. May Seymour, one of his Library School associates, was made sub-librarian for education, and he envisioned "one of the best educational libraries in the country."

In the summer of 1890, Dewey summoned 43 persons "interested in promoting the usefulness of New York libraries" for a meeting at the State Library, with Chancellor George W. Curtis presiding. The upshot of this was the organization of the New York Library Association, of which Dewey was elected president. Plainly, his thinking was spreading out over the entire State of New York.

The New York census of 1890 indicated that about 5,000 blind people were residents of the State. Noting this, Dewey persuaded the Regents to vote a resolution in 1896 "That there be established in the public libraries division a section of books for the blind, from which any blind reader in the state may borrow books after giving needed security for their safe return." This venture started off with a careful study of the needs of blind readers. Books published for touch-reading were expensive, and there were relatively few blind people

in any one community, except in large cities. It was found that a controversy was waged between advocates of various systems of embossed types, and the library sought to steer shy of that. It adopted the New York Point type (raised letters) because the two major schools for the blind in the State were teaching it; although a few books in Braille, too, were acquired. In later years, Braille came to predominate.

* * * *

It is clear that Melvil Dewey was endeavoring, rather highhandedly, one would say, to expand the scope of the State Library far beyond its legislated intent; in short, to make it more of a popular library. He hoped the State Library would be a "People's University."

To begin with, there was the Capitol Library. He conceived of this as a substitute for a traveling library for Albany—a small circulating library primarily for State employees but also accessible to out-of-town visitors who were tired of sightseeing. A selection of books of general interest was set aside for this corner of the library. Dewey soon reported that a natural effect "has been to attract to the library a large number of readers many of whom are young. There used to be a rule shutting out from the privileges of the library all boys and girls under 15, thus working an injustice to the studious young people who would have made as much good use of the books as most of their elders. The present rule is to disregard age, and any child that is clean and orderly is treated exactly like an adult."

The Capitol Library gave birth to the Children's Library. Dewey set apart several tables at one end of the main reading room for the use of the "little people," with a Library School student detailed to watch over them. Children crowded in so that a separate room was established on the fifth floor, adjacent to the Library School, where the youngsters could be "studied." Evidently Dewey was on the defensive about the Children's Library, judging from this passage in a report: "An observer would probably criticize the necessity of a children's room in a state library . . . but the state library of New York is in charge of the library interests of 7,000,000 people and has centers of activity scattered all over the state. When we know that the educational activity of libraries is largely dependent on the way the youngest readers are started, no one can for a moment doubt either the propriety or the necessity of the new movement, which will give us facilities for studying this problem and for making known to all the libraries of the state the results as to theories and methods."

The Children's Library was abandoned "most reluctantly" (quoting Dewey) in 1900, "because of urgent need of space." The Capitol Library was discontinued in 1902, the reason given as "growing pressure for space."

Still another Dewey innovation was the Woman's Library, set off from the rest of the library as a distinct section. This was an aftermath of the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893. The fair had an exhibit of books by female authors, and New York State supplied the largest number, 2,500. At the close of the Exposition, the New York collection was turned over to the State Library as the nucleus for a permanent exhibit on the literary activity of New York women. The addition fitted well with Dewey's sympathy for feminism and the fair sex in general. Lacking any fund that could be used specifically for books by women, Dewey circularized women writers for gifts of their books, and in that way built up the collection.

Dewey's restless imagination was constantly on the prowl, and he turned the State Library into a kind of experimental laboratory. By 1904, he was planning to add music to its services. Player-pianos were just coming into vogue, and he proposed that the library acquire player-piano rolls and lend them out. He argued: "If a citizen may justly go to the library to borrow without cost a play of Shakespeare or a poem of Longfellow, he has just as good a claim to ask for a symphony of Beethoven or a song of Schubert."

Some admirers called Dewey "the Edison of the library field." He seized upon the invention of the linotype to substitute printed catalog cards for the previous hand-written ones, and then to standardize the size of the cards. He introduced a system of "paid help" to assist researchers who lived at a distance from Albany, thus saving the expense of a trip; a member of the staff would make the search on behalf of the inquirer, who would then pay for the service at the rate of the employee's State salary for the time consumed. Dewey started a picture collection, urging upon the Regents the rapidly growing use of photography; the board voted to have the same rules for books apply to the purchase and lending of pictures. He introduced typewriters to the library, noting in 1904: "Six more Oliver typewriters have been furnished those of the staff who demonstrated their ability to make substantial savings by doing their work on machines instead of by hand." He foresaw a great benefit in long-distance telephones for library service, in quick transmission of information to far parts of the State.

Dewey experimented with uniforms for library attendants, on the theory that this would eliminate embarrassment for patrons in making the mistake of asking

another reader for service. All men and boys of the staff, for a trial period, donned uniforms that were at first dark blue, then were changed to a Quaker drab. He made rubber heels mandatory for the staff, in order to promote quietude, and called them "a proper official expense."

Dewey was a crusader for fountain pens, often presenting them as gifts. Habitually he carried a row of five fountain pens in his breast pocket, each filled with a different color of ink. He invented a personal system of shorthand which he called "breves." One duty of the secretary of the Board of Regents was to sign Regents' certificates given to graduating students; in practice, this had been a theoretical duty, the "signatures" being made by rubber stamp. Dewey's conscience would not accept the rubber stamp. He insisted upon signing every certificate with his own hand. In his 10 years as secretary, it was estimated that he signed 300,000 Regents certificates.

The stupendous building of the Library of Congress was completed in Washington during the 1890's. The Joint Committee of Congress on the library held hearings for advice and counsel on reorganization when the building was occupied. Dewey was one of the library experts called to testify, and his words were treated as the most important. He told the Congressmen that the closing years of the 19th Century would be known in history as "distinctively the library age"; and that the public library had become a "totally different institution" from that of the past. He described his decimal catalog system; urged that the Library of Congress undertake printed catalog cards for all other libraries of the Nation; sketched in the ideas of the Union Catalogue and of an Interlibrary Loan Service.

Theodore Roosevelt was elected Governor of New York in 1898. In his inaugural message to the Legislature, he said: "The New York State Library . . . has more than doubled its efficiency within the past ten years and is an inspiration to intellectual life throughout the State. Through its local public libraries, its traveling libraries, its valuable photographic reproductions which are sent from school to school, and its other facilities for home education, it comes in direct contact with every class of the community."

The 10 years of which he spoke were the decade since Melvil Dewey had become its director.

12. Careers for Women

By hallowed tradition and a policy of its Board of Trustees, Columbia College was strictly for men. Some faculty members thought it brash of Melvil Dewey that almost his first act as college librarian was to bring in six new graduates of Wellesley to help him reorganize the library and install the Decimal System. As one of those so-called Wellesley Half Dozen would later recall: "At that time, Columbia College was almost as hermetically sealed to women as is a monastery, and the advent of a group of young college women, appearing in the sacred precincts, must indeed have given occasion for dire forebodings."

The trustees had just summarily rebuffed a proposal by President Frederick A. P. Barnard to allow a touch of coeducation on the campus. In the year of Dewey's arrival, 1883, the board grudgingly allowed Dr. Barnard a compromise—an off-campus course for women under faculty direction. Over the next 5 years only 28 students were enrolled, and the course was dropped as a failure.

The Wellesley Half Dozen, to be sure, were not coeds, but they were women on the campus, hence looked upon as a breach in the barrier. It was fairly clear that Dewey was in league with President Barnard on the feminine issue: Barnard was directly responsible for the conduct of the library. And Dewey was seeing in library work an ideal new career for women—providing that library work could be elevated to the status of a profession. He said: "Women like literary work, and they are finding their way into it without help. . . It's not nervous work, like the schoolteacher's, and doesn't push a timid girl into contact with the rough side of the world such as a business woman has to endure. . . . In the library of the future, the free library, the greatest missionary force of the age, there is going to be a great opening for women's work."

There had never been such a thing as a school for the training of librarians. Dewey started the first one at Columbia in 1887, under the name of the School of Library Economy. Anticipating an enrollment of not more than 10, Dewey enlisted 20—the majority of them women, as expected. Only 24 hours before the class was scheduled to convene, Dewey was notified by the chairman of the trustees' committee on buildings that no room was available. President Barnard argued with the committee all one afternoon, and finally (as Dewey told it) "gave it up as impossibl, and ill with mortification sent for his fisician." Dewey sent for the janitors, informing them he was going to make use of a storeroom over the chapel. They moved out packing boxes, nailed missing legs on broken tables, rustled up a few odd chairs, and sent a truck to Dewey's home for more chairs. Thus equipped, Dewey welcomed his first class "without giving a hint of the volcano on which we all stood."

The trustees did not evict the class from the storeroom; but, on the face of things, there was some justification for the charge that Dewey was guilty of "gross insubordination." Quite aside from the issue of women on campus, many people seriously questioned the need for a library school. A newspaper quoted a young woman: "A school to learn to be a librarian! How very odd! There'll be schools for dry goods clerks next. As if any one with a good education and common sense could not be a librarian."

It was hard for the general public to grasp the notion that the work of a librarian was more than "shoveling books." Even Andrew Carnegie, who already was pouring some of his fortune into the building of libraries, did not get the drift. After joining the State Library, Dewey tried to persuade the steel magnate to lend some support to his library school. Carnegie wrote him: "Your interesting visit was the first I had ever heard of the school for librarians. I was interested in all you said, but you misunderstood me, if you thought I had made a positive promise to contribute funds. . . I have taken occasion to inquire of several parties about the supply of proper persons for libraries, and find that there is no difficulty in getting persons naturally adapted for this work." (In later years, Carnegie changed his mind on this matter.)

If the School of Library Economy was a Trojan horse for the smuggling of girl students into Columbia, it was not the only reason for the animosity aroused by Dewey. His brash unconventionality in general had irritated many faculty members. He had a way of slashing through academic red tape, as he did through political tape after coming to Albany. To him, rules were rules, and staid professors were offended at being forced to pay fines on overdue books. The vigor of his language in library reports ruffled feathers. All in all, the overture from Albany was timely, and probably saved Dewey from outright dismissal at Columbia. Indeed, a resolution had been introduced at a meeting of the college trustees in November 1888: "That it is the pleasure

of the Trustees to dismiss Mr. Dewey from his office of Librarian from this date." He had already been placed under temporary suspension while serving as consultant to the State. The resolution was referred to a special committee, which voted on December 3 to lay it on the table, and resolved "That the suspension heretofore ordered be and hereby is revoked." Quite possibly the trustees were forewarned that Dewy was about to quit. On December 20 Dewey submitted his resignation, and on January 7, 1889, the trustees accepted it.

The School of Library Economy was permitted to complete its winter term, ending March 30, but on January 12 the Board of Regents at Albany heard a letter from Dr. Henry Drisler, acting president of Columbia (President Barnard having just died), proposing the transfer of the school to the State Library. The Regents accepted it, without committing the State to the expenditure of any money; in fact, saving it money by requiring that the students get part of their training (as Dewey wished) by working as free help for the State Library. This arrangement was couched in the words authorizing the director of the library to "employ such assistants as are found best fitted for the work and are willing to give their services for a satisfactory time without other compensation than the instruction and supervision furnished by the library." The "apprentice help" could be used to advantage, Dewey pointed out, with all the reorganizing that was to be done.

The school was moved to the State Capitol in April of that year—and with it a balance of $548.05 in cash. Thereafter it became known as the New York State Library School, and it was given a classroom on the fifth floor, in the corner pavilion above the Regents offices. Thirteen second-year students transferred from Columbia, and 19 new ones were admitted for the next term. Along with the school came its entire teaching staff, of whom Florence Woodworth and May Seymour were the best-known and most durable in the Albany years. Walter Stanley Biscoe, Dewey's Amherst classmate, was appointed catalog librarian and also taught in the school.

It was a two-year school, fulfilling the junior and senior years for students who had completed two years of college, and awarding a degree of Bachelor of Library Science. (In 1902, the faculty turned it into a graduate school by deciding to require a degree from a registered college for admission.) After it had become established at Albany, a tuition fee of $50 was assessed, $100 for out-of-State students. Standards were raised as a waiting-list developed, until marks of 90 in three-fourths of all work toward a degree were required for entrance. One librarian, lauding it at an American Library Association convention, said: "The very elect go there. No drones are admitted."

The school quickly acquired an international reputation. By 1902, students had been enrolled from Nova Scotia, Australia, England, Germany, Holland, Norway, and Sweden. Hawaii was soon added to the list.

Courtesy, Lake Placid Club Education Foundation.

The New York State Library School's faculty and class of 1892. Melvil Dewey is seated in the center.

The Library School's study room after its removal into the State Education Building in 1912.

Graduates went home to found schools on the same model in foreign lands, as they did in many parts of the United States. When the fall term of 1893 opened at Albany, it was noted that five other library schools had already been started by Albany graduates: at Drexel Institute, Philadelphia; at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn; at Amherst College; at Armour Institute, Chicago; and at the Los Angeles Public Library.

For the first several years, the number of students had to be limited to 30, owing to lack of space. The first summer course was given in 1896 "at the urgent request of library assistants who could not leave their positions for the full course." The policy of having the students work for the library was discontinued after 1905, on the score that it was "uneconomical of the time of the library staff."

The demand for graduates of the school to fill positions in other libraries was constant. Early alumni had appointments waiting for them at Smith College, Cornell, the University of Michigan, Vassar College, Newark, and Kansas City.

Dewey found that "the State Library, in its organization and appointments, rooms and other facilities, is much better adapted to this work than was the Columbia College library." At the St. Louis convention of the American Library Association in 1889, several speakers sang the praises of the Library School, and one said: "There is good ground for believing that it is well that the library school has been transferred to Albany."

Criticism quickly began to be heard, however, especially of maintaining the school in the Capitol building. Carpers wished to know "why a school is kept in the Capitol any more for one profession than for another." It didn't take Dewey himself long to realize that the Capitol was not the ideal milieu—that it was, in fact, "quite the reverse of what should be chosen for the school." He foresaw that "Sooner or later the school will be a target for those impatient to inherit the space it occupies"; as well as "the danger that the school may sooner or later be involved in politics." "The state ought to support the training of professional librarians just as surely as it does that of professional teachers," he said, "but what school man would consent to have his normal school carried on in the office of the superintendent of public instruction in the Capitol building?"

Dewey confided later that "of all the things he had attempted in the library world from 1873 onward none gave him serener satisfaction than the Library School." Its students were his special pets while he remained in Albany. He owned a team of fine horses which he drove "with a dexterous hand," and often took the whole Library School out for drives, by installments. Later when he acquired an automobile he continued this practice, with horsepower in place of horses.

When in 1905 Dewey was about to leave the State Library, one of his chief worries was what was to become of the Library School (evidently feeling that it must not be left at Albany without his guidance). He

wrote the Columbia University librarian, James H. Canfield, about the possibility of Columbia's taking it back. Canfield replied that he had discussed the matter with President Nicholas Murray Butler, and found that they did not have "a square foot of floor space" to spare, not to mention money. "We would not consider the proposition under any circumstances," Canfield bluntly said. Dewey next felt out the University of Chicago. But the school remained in Albany while its founder departed.

Ironically, the Carnegie Corporation, in the early 1920's, made a careful study of leading library schools with a view to how it might assist them. One result of this survey was the recommendation that they ought to be departments of large universities. In April 1926, President Butler of Columbia announced that his university would soon establish a School for Library Service, under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation which had agreed to supply $1,385,000 over a period of 10 years. It was to absorb the library school of the New York Public Library.

Several days later, Dr. Frank P. Graves, State Commissioner of Education, reported to the Board of Regents that the trustees of Columbia University had requested the transfer of the Library School back to Columbia, to be combined with that of the New York Public Library. Said Dr. Graves: "Under the circumstances it would be poor educational policy and a duplication of effort to continue our graduate school in Albany in such close proximity to the new institution which, with the prestige and resources of Columbia behind it, will soon become the strongest in the country."

The Regents voted that the transfer be approved, since "it is clearly more advantageous for the Library School than any status that can reasonably be assured for it at Albany." They added a resolution: "That the hearty good will and good wishes of the Board of Regents go with the school to its new home." Columbia purchased the classroom furniture and half of the working library of the school; the other half—the historical collection, the alumni collection, pictures, and quite a lot of furniture were given outright to Columbia.

Enrolled in the farewell classes at Albany were 148 students in all courses for the year. In the last commencement address, Dr. Wyer, director of the State Library, said that, in its 40 years of existence, the school had enrolled a total of 1,079 students in its two-year course, 911 in its summer school. Of these, 20 percent had been men.

13. Libraries on Wheels

At the start of 1893, a thousand books were chosen out of the State Library's stock by a "book board" consisting of five members of the staff. They were picked for broad general interest and in such a way as to preserve a balance between informative and recreational reading. Then the 1,000 volumes were apportioned into lots of 100, making 10 miniature libraries. Each mini-library was shelved in two sturdy oak bookcases with lockable doors; and along with it went an oak charging tray, complete with cards, labels, and rubber stamps. Thus were the traveling libraries prepared to begin their tours around New York State, breaking ground for what later generations would know as Library Extension.

The first of the peripatetic libraries (as Melvil Dewey liked to call them) was sent forth on February 8, 1893, and went to the Saratoga County hamlet of Charlton, 25 of whose citizens had signed a petition to borrow it for community use. The second was shipped 3 days later to Fort Plain, in the Mohawk Valley. The destinations of others were as far north as Plattsburgh and as far west as Canandaigua and Dundee.

The traveling libraries took to the road as the result of a piece of legislation passed in 1892 authorizing the State Library to lend "selections of books for a limited time to any public library in this state under visitation of the regents, or to any community not yet having established such library, but which has conformed to the conditions required for such loans." The library made ready the initial 10 units and invited applications for their loan to small local libraries, or to communities on the petition of 25 resident taxpayers. A fee of $5 was exacted to cover part of the cost of the outfits and their transportation for a six-months loan.

The concept of itinerant libraries, to reach people otherwise deprived of book borrowing opportunities, was not exactly new, but its trials had been very limited. The Boston & Albany Railroad had sent out library cars in 1869 for the benefit of its isolated employees, and the idea had been picked up by other railways. But not before had such an experiment been launched by a state agency on a state-wide basis. It wasn't long before other states were imitating New York.

From the moment he became director of the State Library and secretary of the Board of Regents, Dewey urged the desirability of extending the library's services into every highway and byway of the State as a kind of "people's college." In an address to the Convocation of the Board of Regents in 1889, he said: "If the great collection owned by the State is to do anything like its full work, it must adopt the principle of itineracy, for single books as well as for small working libraries. . . The quickness, cheapness and ease with which our books could be made available to all sections of the State would add enormously to the practical value of its great collection as the real University library of a real University of the State. . . While it is desirable that every community should have its own permanent library, there can hardly be a better means to stimulate interest and create a demand than by sending carefully selected traveling libraries to teach the people how much pleasure and profit they could derive from the best books."

Dewey followed up the speech by drafting resolutions which were unanimously adopted by the Regents: "That the Regents recognize as an important feature of their work the extension of university learning and culture to those who are unable to take the regular course in a college or university"; setting up a committee on university extension, whose scope was to include "a plan for lending to communities, for use during university extension courses, suitable libraries, collections, apparatus and illustrations."

The extension movement in New York State had barely gained a foothold when Governor Roswell P. Flower administered a blow from which it was a long time recovering. He gave fair notice of his attitude in his inaugural message, in January 1892, when he spoke with sympathy of the growing popularity of "University Extension," but questioned it as a responsibility of State Government. Governor Flower predicted that it would "involve the State in unreasonable obligations and be a constantly increasing object of public expense."

When the Legislature ignored the Governor's thoughts on this matter, and included $10,000 in its Supply Bill for the Regents to go on promoting educational extension, Mr. Flower vetoed the item. In the veto message, he said: "I sympathize thoroughly with the object of the so-called university extension movement; but I think it should be undertaken by individual enterprise rather than by the State."

Perhaps because it did not carry with it an appropriation, Governor Flower did not interfere with the action of the same Legislature enabling the State Library to send out traveling libraries. This was a key phase of the extension program, as Dewey had outlined it, and he seized upon it as a means to salvage what he could from the wreckage of his plan.

Dewey was never shy regarding his innovations and accomplishments, especially in writing his exceptionally readable annual reports on the State Library. Curiously, however, he refrained from talking about the traveling libraries for 7 years after they were launched. One may speculate that he did not wish to call them to official notice any more than necessary. By 1900, however, extension activity was on a sounder footing and the library had a Home Education Division. Dewey's letterhead bore the words: "State Library and Home Education." His turn-of-the-century report noted that nearly 1,000 traveling libraries were making their rounds. Besides books, they circulated 24,500 photographs and lantern slides of art masterpieces. All but three other states had copied the system. And Dewey observed: "These traveling libraries are forerunners of local free public libraries which are being established in many new communities each year. Between 1893 and 1900 the number of independently organized libraries under state supervision has grown from 29 to 175, the books from 69,956 to 606,332."

Now Dewey began to talk about "house libraries" and "book wagons." He wanted to reach every lonely farmhouse in the State with books. "The long winter evenings when there is nothing to do on the farm and no city attractions and distractions to draw people away from home afford unusual opportunity for exciting interest in good books. No class has so much leisure time for reading as farmers outside their busy season. Some do not read at all." He proposed putting up packages of 10 books each, loading them into a large wagon holding 100 or more "house libraries," and driving them from house to house, exchanging the books as they were finished. Such ideas were to eventuate, with the passage of time and the improvement of motor vehicles, in bookmobiles.

* * * *

As an extension service to local public libraries, a State Library Bulletin, *Best Books,* was introduced in 1898 and continued annually for many years; finally to be succeeded by the *Bookmark*. This was designed to assist community librarians in making their purchases by appraising the new books of a given year. Among the *Best Books of 1897,* for example, were listed: *Soldiers of Fortune,* by Richard Harding Davis; *Captains Courageous,* by Rudyard Kipling; *The Spoils of Poynton,* by Henry James; and *St. Ives,* by Robert Louis Stevenson. For 1900, some choices were Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim,* Mark Twain's *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg,* Irving Bacheller's *Eben Holden,* Ida Tarbell's *Life of Abraham Lincoln,* Stephen Crane's *Whilomville Stories,* and Booth Tarkington's *Monsieur Beaucaire*.

Melvil Dewey was a prophet of most of the things that have transpired since his time in the extension of the State Library's benefits and influence to the uttermost limits of the State—of centralized library systems, of interlibrary loans and communications. In his last report as librarian, for 1904, he wrote: "The principle is now thoroughly established in libraries as in manufacturing, that stores in small communities can carry only stock which sells readily. When orders come for things seldom needed they must be got from the wholesale depot. Economy and efficiency demand that the State Library stand in this relation to the hundreds (soon to be thousands) of libraries which are really its local representatives in supplying needed reading to the people of the whole State."

But technologically his thinking could not go beyond the telephone. His wildest dreams did not encompass the teletypewriter, much less facsimile transmission by which entire documents or passages from books can be flashed to distant libraries over wires. The invention of Alexander Graham Bell permitted him to say: "The rapid spread of the telephone makes it important to be open long hours and ready to answer all reasonable inquiries by telephone from any part of the State. In many cases editors, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, public speakers, teachers and others want a piece of information for immediate use that will not answer a day or two later and that can be had in a moment's reference by an expert in the State Library. Telephonic use is bound to increase with great rapidity and to be of priceless service to the State at large."

With the Unification Act of 1904, the State Education Department came into being, ending the long schismatic controversy by consolidating the Department of Public Instruction with the University of the State of New York, making the Board of Regents its governing body. Dewey was thereupon named Director of Libraries and Home Education, but did not stay long. In 1906 a Division of Educational Extension was set up under supervision of the State librarian, with William R. Eastman as its chief.

The activities of this agency expanded year by year, and it was renamed the Library Extension Division. In 1927, it received a new chief—Dr. Frank L. Tolman—who was to give it notable development. Tolman

had come to the library as reference librarian in 1906, from the University of Chicago, and remained in that post until being appointed director of Adult Education and the Library Extension Division. The quality of his devoted work was recognized in 1945 when Governor Thomas E. Dewey presented Dr. Tolman with the first Harold J. Fisher Memorial Award for "meritorious contribution to the public service of New York State."

During the year 1941, the State Library sent out 1,609 traveling libraries, circulating a total of 106,795 books. They ranged from 10-volume house libraries to central loans of 1,000 books. They were borrowed by public libraries, schools, study clubs, rural communities, home bureaus, granges, summer camps, parent-teacher associations, church groups, State training schools, State prisons, and State hospitals.

From *Melvil Dewey. Seer: Inspirer: Doer.* Courtesy, Lake Placid Club Education Foundation.

Original Lake Placid Club House, Boni Blink (Bonnie Blink), 1895
With a Capacity of Thirty and Located on Five Akers of Ground

The original Lake Placid clubhouse which Melvil Dewey and his wife, Annie, acquired as a refuge from pollen during hay fever season.

14. A Parting of Ways

Pollen allergies were a vexing problem for both Melvil and Annie Dewey. His trouble was hay fever, hers was "rose cold." When he was 17, Dewey made a note in his diary that a doctor guessed "I would not live two years." Later he wrote that he frequently felt ill with "cof, difficulty in breathing, catar." How far off that doctor was in his prognosis may be seen in a comment made by Dewey at the age of 80: "I hav never graspt the tho't that sum day I shd 'retyr'."

With the recurrence of each ragweed season, the couple fled for some place which was relatively pollen-free. Even before settling at Albany, they had heard that the Adirondacks were celebrated as such a refuge. In time they discovered the Lake Placid region which was not yet easy of access and was little exploited as a resort. Passing a vacation as guests in a cabin beside Mirror Lake, they found such relief from their suffering and were so enchanted by the surroundings that they purchased a building nearby which had been a summer boarding house, with five acres of land. (Adirondack buffs are aware of the fact that the village of Lake Placid is not situated on Lake Placid, but on Mirror Lake.)

The boardinghouse had been called Bonnie Blink, which Dewey changed to Boni Blink. Since it had room for as many as 30 guests, the Deweys often invited associates from the State Library to join them there. The thought next occurred that they would like to have a summer colony of congenial folk about them. In 1893 Dewey wrote to a select few friends: "We are intensely interested in getting for neighbors people whom of all others we would prefer. I make therefore half a dozen copies of this letter to send to those whom we are specially anxious to summer with us at Lake Placid."

The germinal thought was a cooperative vacation resort—a kind of "backwoods university" where "the country's best will exchange ideas before the open hearth." One of the early recruits wrote perceptively of Dewey: "He could never accept anything in a calm and receptive mood. He laid hold upon the beauties of nature almost aggressively. He could not be content to enjoy summers at Lake Placid without trying to invent things and create things, and thus leave a permanent mark upon the locality."

A permanent mark he emphatically left upon the northern Adirondacks: the Lake Placid Club, and the world renown of Lake Placid as both a summer and winter resort. As applicants appeared for his unusual community, Dewey purchased more land and erected cottages for them to lease. The cooperative plan proving impractical from a maintenance viewpoint, the enterprise evolved into a proprietary club, with the Deweys as principal owners, though members were invited to buy stock in the holding corporation, the Lake Placid Company. One thing the property never was—a hotel. It functioned from the outset as a membership club, and the distinction was important in a heated controversy which one day swirled about the State Library.

Bonnie Blink was enlarged, with random additions as needed, into an enormous main clubhouse, while scores of family cottages multiplied on the slopes beneath the conifers, against a rugged mountain backdrop. Golf courses, tennis courts, bridle paths, hiking trails, a theater, a chapel, lecture halls, banquet rooms, water sports facilities were developed. Health and clean living were the keynote. The Lake Placid Club grew into the largest residential club in the world. It was virtually a self-sufficient village, with dairy herds, vegetable and poultry farms, and its own police and fire protection. The introduction of winter sports dates from a day in 1904 when a few members cleared the snow from a section of Mirror Lake to "get up an appetite for lunch." Nearly 30 years later the Lake Placid Club spearheaded a campaign which brought the Winter Olympics to Lake Placid, making it the "St. Moritz of America."

Courtesy, Lake Placid Club.

The Lake Placid Club as it looks today, viewed from the opposite shore of Mirror Lake.

Upon this unique and prosperous institution Melvil Dewey implanted his individuality. It had to have cultural events in profusion, from concerts to conferences to lectures. No liquor was allowed on the premises (a rule which, in modern times, has been relaxed). Dewey would not countenance a bellboy who drank or smoked. Every employee was thoroughly investigated before hiring. The dining-room menus often puzzled newcomers and guests; they were printed in the sparest of simplified spelling (another rule which has since gone by the boards). Since he wanted only "congenial people" who would mix well, Dewey set severe standards of membership, ranging from Class A ("those admirably suited to further the ideals of the club") to Class E ("unsuitables who, if already in, must be eliminated; if still out, must be excluded for the protection of the rest.")

* * * *

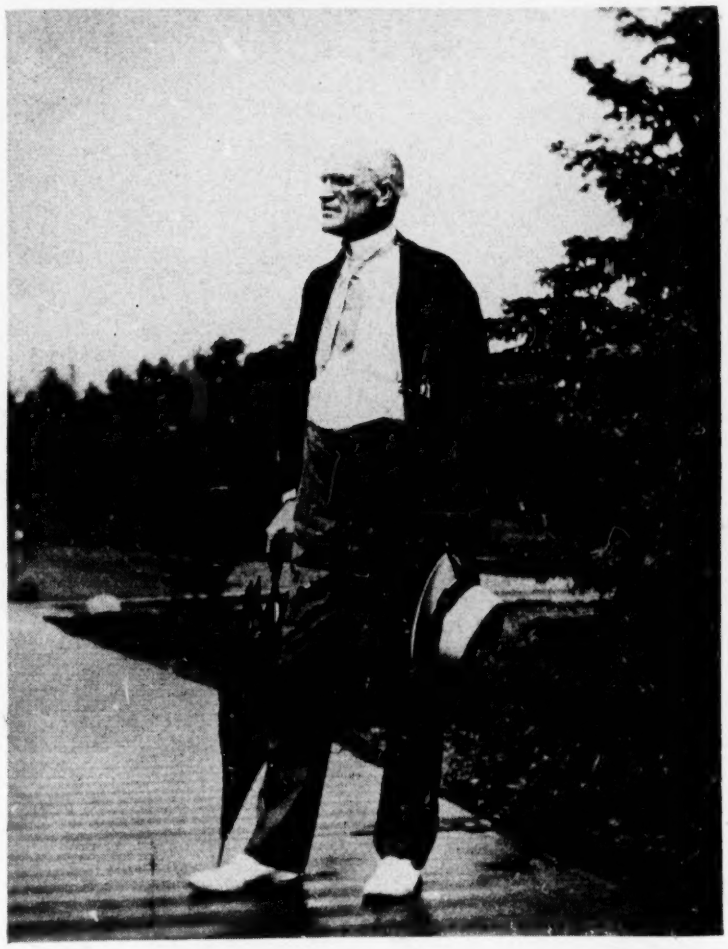
Dewey's connection with the Lake Placid Club soon began to furnish his political enemies at Albany with fresh ammunition. Whispers circulated that he was cheating the State of working time in order to devote himself to a club (or alleged resort hotel) from which he was pocketing money. Meanwhile the running argument about the two-headed system of education went on, and the secretary of the Board of Regents drew headlines such as: "After Dewey's Scalp" and "Charges Against Dewey."

When Theodore Roosevelt became Governor in 1899, he appointed Dewey as a member of a special commission to recommend a plan for unification of the State's education activities. At the same time, the Board of Regents had a committee for a like purpose and there were points of divergence in the two reports. Once more Dewey was under attack, and this time he resigned as secretary of the Board of Regents. He pleaded waning health from the strain of holding the two positions at once; but then added that he was tendering the resignation "because I believe that the fact of a vacancy in the position of secretary may be a factor in the solution of the much discussed question of educational unification." He would give his entire time thenceforth to the State Library and the Home Education Department, he said. The Regents accepted the resignation "with much regret."

Unification became a fact in 1904. The news that Dr. Andrew Sloan Draper was being recalled to be New York's first Commissioner of Education was ominous for Dewey. The antipathy which had previously existed between the two men was sure to crop out anew. Even educational leaders felt, and often said openly, that Draper was primarily a politician and only secondarily an educator. He had been superintendent of public instruction by appointment of a partisan Legislature, and had been ousted from the job the moment the Legislature went Democratic. He had been chairman of the Republican County Committee and a delegate to the Republican national convention. Dewey could not abide politicians, even one who had turned into a capable educational administrator.

In one of his first talks to the Board of Regents as Commissioner, Dr. Draper referred to Dewey as a man "with whom I have worked long and differed much in years gone by"; and used the phrase, "my feelings as to State Library policies are so much at variance with his." Announcing his appointment of Dewey as director of the new Home Education Division, the Commissioner said: "He has shown every disposition to accept my ways of administration." Then he went on to say that "Much in this Division does not square with my views of sound public policy and good administration," and

From the Melvil Dewey Papers at the Columbia University Library.



Melvil Dewey in his later years, on the grounds of the Lake Placid Club.

that he was "tentatively opposed to many of the projects which commend themselves to the intellectually prolific and widely experienced Director of this Division." Draper took the occasion to deliver what amounted to a general critique of Dewey's conduct of the library, saying he saw a predisposition "to start something new simply because it is new, or to set up something different only because it is different. . . innovations of thought and practice which are more disturbing than logical, and more confounding than progressive." And he questioned: ". . . is it not nobler to put the resources —that is, the time, thought and money—of the State into features which will make the New York State Library great, rather than merely big; enduring, rather than popular; stimulating to the most exhausting intellectual effort, rather than contributive to the usual and ordinary instrumentalities which any city, town or school district may easily supply up to the reasonable limits of the needs or proper claims of its people?"

Some hints of Dewey's simultaneous reactions to Draper may be gleaned from confidential letters he wrote after the split was in the open. He said, for instance, that he had never once seen Draper in the State Library in 18 months since his return to Albany, yet he presumed to criticize it. To Regent Pliny T. Sexton, his closest friend on the Board of Regents, he confessed that the last year (1904-05) "has been the bitterest disappointment of my life in seeing the hopes of many things doomed to failure and disappointment under our new head. . . . There is no hope that I can do satisfactory work under such conditions. . . . Many of the ideals for which we worked are dead. Let them rest in peace, but surely the intelligent public will someday demand that they rise again." He told Sexton that Draper had been almost insulting to him when he visited his office, with a "violent outburst of temper," and the threat: "I will show you how the fight will come out." Dewey also mentioned that Draper was "hopelessly broken in health" and was building up irritability as a consequence. (Not long before, Draper had lost a leg in a runaway of his carriage horses.)

* * * *

The bombshell burst on January 18, 1905, when a petition was presented to the Board of Regents demanding the removal of Melvil Dewey as director of the State Library on the ground that "as president of the Lake Placid Company he had participated in an unjust discrimination against Jews, as a class or race." At the same time a statement on the petition was given to the New York newspapers, which played it with major headlines. The rumpus that ensued could well be classed as a public furor.

The petition was not to be ignored. It was signed by Louis Marshall and others. Marshall was a very prominent New York attorney who specialized in constitutional law. The "others" were 10 of the most eminent Jewish citizens of the United States, and some of the richest financiers: Jacob H. Schiff, Adolph Lewisohn, Daniel Guggenheim, Isidor Straus, Henry R. Ickelheimer, Nathan Bijur, Cyrus L. Sulzberger, Edward J. Nathan, Adolph S. Ochs, and Abraham Abraham. The margin for error was probably on the conservative side when an unspecified New York informant told Dewey that these men, among them, represented easily $500,000,000.

The petition referred to a certain booklet of the Lake Placid Club for evidence of its charge. This was a club circular for 1901, containing membership regulations, including this unfortunate paragraph:

"No one will be received as member or guest against whom there is physical, moral, social, or race objection, or who would be unwelcome to even a small minority. This excludes absolutely all consumptives, or other invalids, whose presence might injure health or modify others' freedom or enjoyment. This invariable rule is rigidly enforced: it is found impracticable to make exceptions to Jews or others excluded, even when of unusual personal qualifications."

It was no secret that the Lake Placid Club had an exclusive membership, but the fact had not before been aired in print. As a private club, of course, it had the privilege of being selective. More than one writer has since stated that the Lake Placid Club set a precedent for anti-Semitism which long prevailed in the resort hotels of the Adirondacks. Still, it was not a hotel. The petition referred to "this alleged club"; and harked back to the fact that it had originally used the name of the Lake Placid Hotel Company (actually, that had been a defunct company when the Deweys arrived on the scene, and they temporarily adopted its title after acquiring some of its property).

The petition which now confronted the Regents set forth that the 750,000 Jews of New York State felt they had a right to demand that a public servant, representing all people of the State, under sanction of the Regents, "shall not, with impunity, pander to the lowest prejudices of which man is capable." It went on: ". . . when a high public official who has been placed by you at the head of an important branch of the educational system of the State, one to whom the youth of the State are accustomed to look for instruction and guidance, for precept and example, either from motives of religious or racial hostility, or from considerations of pecuniary greed, or from ignorance or bigotry, can so far forget himself and the duties which he owes to the

entire public as to spread broadcast through the land a publication which tends to make of the Jew an outcast and a pariah, the State, and you as its right arm, cannot afford to trifle with the offender or allow an infamous precedent to be established. There is but one course to pursue, and that is to remove from the service of the State the official whose act undermines the very foundations of our governmental system."

As the storm gathered, it was brought out, for the guidance of the Regents, that Mr. and Mrs. Dewey owned the majority stock in the Lake Placid Company; that the club was a separate organization accessory to the company, although the company owned and managed the club property; that its regulations were enacted by a Council of the club, of which Dewey was not a member though he usually sat in its meetings.

One of the alleged complaints was that the club and its affiliated businesses exploited Dewey's title as State Librarian in its advertising. Dewey declared this to be "absolutely unfounded," saying that his mere name and private address appeared on some lists and letterheads, and that "My library position has never been printed as alleged."

The question as to how the offending club circular found its way into the hands of the petitioning group remained a mystery. Dewey himself suspected that Commissioner Draper was at the bottom of it, and that this was the means he had chosen to get rid of him. He confided to Regent Sexton in a letter that he "was told in New York" that the pamphlet had been conveyed to one of the protesting gentlemen by Draper, personally. He said that the anti-Jewish phrase appeared only that once in the circular, and that it was omitted in later printings.

The library committee of the Board of Regents conducted a hearing on February 2, at which testimony was taken on both sides. At his own request, Dewey was heard. He did not deny that the Lake Placid Club barred Jews. He said that the club "is my recreation," that it was a social club, and as such had a right to limit membership. Far from being a hotel, he said it was originated by people who "objected to hotels." Suggesting the possible origin of the controversy, he told the Regents that "a Jew to whom for years I have shown every possible official courtesy" had asked him to get admission for him at the club; that he replied that his State duties forbade him to have anything to do with club details; that he would have to apply to the club Council. He testified that this man then "threatened in the presence of others, who will verify the fact, to punish me because he was excluded."

Dewey expressed his personal attitude in these words: "Officially, I have always refused to recognize race or faith except to respect religious and ethnical prejudices. Jews have been and are among the ablest members of my staff, and among the ablest students in our library school, have often been at my house, and every one of them will vouch for as warm a welcome and as fair treatment, both personal and official, as accorded to any Christian. The Lake Placid Company has given some of its most valued patronage to Jews, and three times has sold real estate at Lake Placid to them."

Dewey did not lack for influential voices raised in his defense. His long-time friend, Herbert Putnam, the Librarian of Congress, for instance, wrote a letter to the Board of Regents for presentation at the hearing. Without presuming to pass an opinion on the charge of anti-Semitism, Putnam addressed himself to the accusation of long absences from library duties, saying: ". . . such a charge is as ridiculous as its motive appears to be contemptible. Mr. Dewey eats, drinks, sleeps and talks library and library work throughout the 24 hours, the week, the month, and the year. His physical whereabouts at any one time is immaterial. He carries his business with him to his home. . . He is, in effect, as much engaged with it at Lake Placid as he is at Albany; it is as much his play as it is his work. He is the clearest example in our profession of a man who cannot shake off his business. . . Is he to be judged by a day or by a year? . . . There is no man living today to whom more than to him is due the prodigious activity of the past quarter of a century in the promotion of libraries, and in the diffusion of interest in them. . . His name is more widely known abroad than that of any other living American librarian. . . With the grounds of the petition itself we other librarians have nothing to do; but we should hate to see a great state estimate an administrator of large interests as though he were a thousand dollar clerk in a railroad office."

* * * *

On February 15 the full Board of Regents held a special meeting to act on the petition. The action it took was in the form of a resolution:

"That the Board of Regents censures the publication by an officer of the Education Department of the expression complained of in the petition concerning an important class of people, which also has official representatives under the Board, furnishes large support to the State and has many youth in the schools,

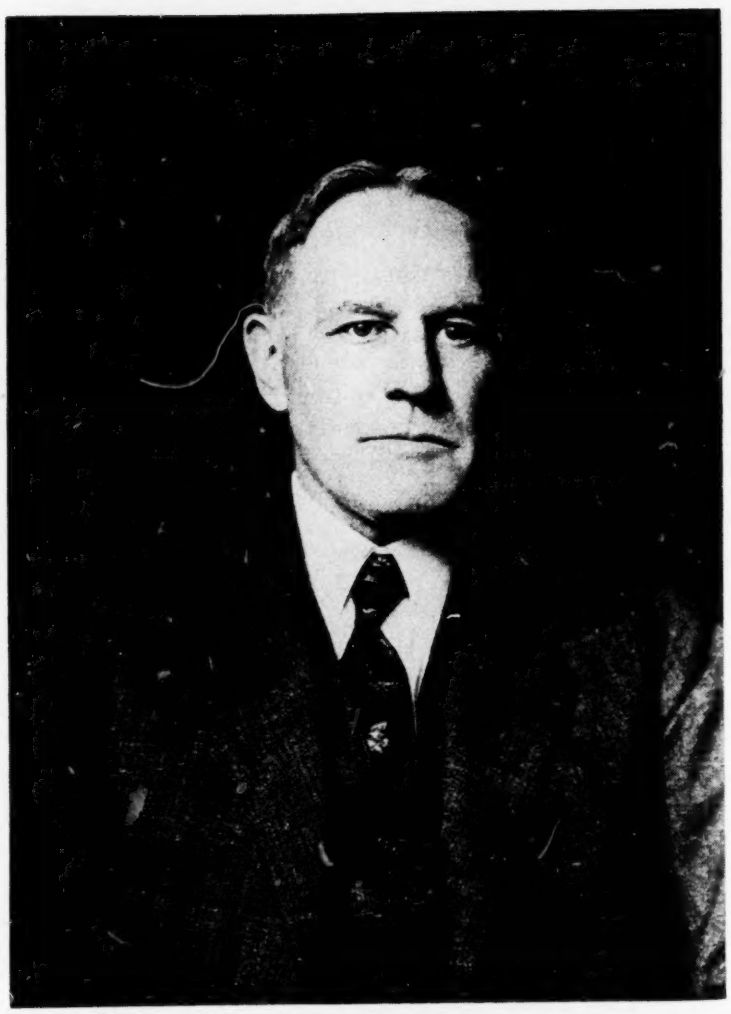
"That the officers of the Board be instructed to communicate at once to Mr. Dewey the formal and severe public rebuke of the Board for this conduct,

"That the Board admonishes the Director of the State Library that the further control of a private business which continues to be conducted on such lines is incompatible with the legitimate requirements of his position in the service of the educational interests of the State of New York."

By no means did this end the matter. In the first place, Dewey chose not to resign (for months to come), and to fight it out instead. Newspapers had a field day in the continuing debate, many of them taking the view expressed in one headline: "Politics Enters State Library." Papers of Democratic hue were especially vocal on that point, the Albany *Argus,* for example, saying: "Gradually the Odell machine is reaching out for the patronage of the New York State Library." (Benjamin B. Odell, Jr., was Governor and at the same time chairman of the Republican State Committee). One Dewey partisan who spoke out was Dr. Isaac K. Funk, of the publishing firm of Funk & Wagnalls, and he said publicly: "Dr. Dewey is not being driven out of his position because of his alleged prejudice against the Hebrews. . . but because he stands in the way of certain political bosses who want to use the State Library for political patronage. Dr. Dewey has fought this thing fearlessly for years. Time and again efforts have been made to provide places for incompetent politicians in the library and he has always promptly dismissed them and put competent men in their places."

Dewey himself wrote to a friend: "If I am ousted it will be on a purely political issue. . . It may become my duty to shake the whole political gang and tell the plain truth." To Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia, he confided: "Men that I didn't dream were specially interested have taken up the cudgels and evidences multiply that it will bring me support and backing for my library work which would never have come except for this ridiculous onslaught. It is clearly a blessing in disguise. You will be glad to know personally that in the week since this remarkable censure I have felt stronger in my position and power for usefulness than before in five years. We have met the enemy and certainly we are not his'n. . . Everybody knows it was of course a political sop to an enormous class of voters who now have a candidate each year on the state ticket. With 700,000 in New York they must not be ignored."

Chancellor James R. Day of Syracuse University, a member of the Lake Placid Club, heard from him: "You may be sure I shall not resign on any impulse or pressure. . . They are utilizing the prejudices of certain people on both sides because I disagreed with them about unification and other questions, but I have a heart void of offense. I did right according to my lights and I shall serenely abide the result."



Edwin H. Anderson succeeded Dewey as State librarian. He and his wife had left Pittsburgh because of the smoky air pollution.

But it was a losing battle for Melvil Dewey. He might ignore the censure but he could not forever hold out against the cumulative pressures. In September 1905, while he was still in refuge from ragweed pollen at Lake Placid, he gave in to the urgings of five of the most powerful Regents, among them his friend Pliny Sexton, and came to Albany for a closed-door conference. From this he emerged to deliver his written resignation to Commissioner Draper and the Board of Regents, on September 20. In accepting it, the Regents voted the "expression of grateful recognition and sincere appreciation. . . of the value of his services to the cause of public education and of library development during the 17 years of his official labors therein—years which clearly mark an epoch in educational work in this commonwealth."

In explanation of his decision to resign after all, Dewey wrote to Regent Sexton: "I had fully intended

not to resign but to force my enemies to remove me and bear the onus. At the last moment, however, it was clear that I could best protect staff and school by resigning. Briefly, the library with the rest of the Education Department has fallen a prey to practical politics." He said he felt that a serious conflict would "wreck the school"; and that his "highest duty. . . was to take the peaceful course. . . to conserve the interests of my staff and students."

On December 14, Commissioner Draper nominated, and the Regents confirmed, Edwin H. Anderson to be director of the State Library. A native of Indiana and a graduate of Wabash College, Anderson had attended the Albany Library School in 1890-91. For the past decade he had been librarian of the Carnegie Library at Pittsburgh. His resignation there had been submitted because the smoky air of the steel city was affecting the health of both himself and his wife.

Melvil Dewey devoted the remainder of his life to his beloved Lake Placid Club. After his wife's death in 1922, he married for the second time. He built a branch of the Lake Placid Club in Florida, where he had Lake Stearns renamed as Lake Placid. He died at the Florida club in 1931, just past his 80th birthday.

In tribute to him, Columbia University in 1938 established a Melvil Dewey Professorship of Library Service, endowed by the Carnegie Corporation of New York—the first endowed chair in any library school.

15. Wanted: A New Home

In January 1904, the world heard of another shocking library disaster. The Biblioteca Nazionale at the University of Turin, Italy, was the victim. Fire, presumably from an electrical short-circuit, erupted in early morning hours and burned fiercely until after daybreak. Public indignation was heaped on governmental authorities, who were blamed for 30 past years of negligence in the face of repeated warnings. Only recently the library had applied for a modest 4,000 lire for fire preventive measures, and been refused.

The aspect that made the Turin blaze most heartbreaking was the antiquity of so much that was lost. Rare Greek, Arab, Persian, Coptic, and Hebrew manuscripts were destroyed, along with the royal library of the House of Savoy. Hundreds of Latin documents from the Roman Empire perished, including some palimpsests of Cicero and Cassiodorus, and a copy of Pliny's *Natural History*. In the ashes lay the beautiful *Les Heures de Turin,* executed in the first half of the 1400's for the Duke Jean de Berry.

A Cambridge professor wrote the *London Times:* "Every year produces its tale of such disasters. Is not the lesson that should be learnt obvious?"

In Albany, State Library people took another hard look at their surroundings and shuddered a little. For years there had been talk about a separate library building, and the Legislature had once authorized a preliminary study for a site. Of course, overcrowding was the main problem, but Melvil Dewey—who, back in 1891, had described the library quarters as "absolutely fireproof"—had been increasingly stressing the fire menace in late years. For example, in his 1900 report he said:

> The Capitol walls are so massive that we have no fear of fire except as it might burn out individual rooms finished in wood. Hundreds of thousands of feet of oak have been used in shelving and interior finish, and in spite of careful installation of electric wires, we cannot avoid the fear that some day this woodwork in some room will be accidentally set on fire and priceless material destroyed. The scientific explanation of how the fire occurred may be perfect, but the fact that rats or mice gnawed off insulation or that workmen accidentally broke it with their saws (as has happened a score of times in the past dozen years) might tell how it happened, but will not replace our lost treasures . . . In our manuscript room are collections which have cost the state vast sums and which money could not replace, and yet there is no place to keep them except a room honeycombed with oak and interlaced with electric wires.

At this point the suggestion was first made that some of the library's most priceless possessions be singled out and stored apart in a fireproof place. Dewey proposed either a large iron safe or a small room, perhaps in the Capitol basement, which would be fireproof and dampproof. Nothing came of this eminently sensible idea for nearly 10 years. Then it was Commissioner Draper who ordered the choicest items—such as the Charles II Charter, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Washington relics—taken downstairs and locked up in a safe in the Regents offices. Consequently Draper ever since has been given the credit for the foresight.

In reality, the library had considerable fire protection of its own, more so than the Capitol as a whole. It had been equipped with chemical fire extinguishers, axes, and hose lines since 1895. Nor did it depend upon the regular Capitol staff for its security. Due to the extraordinary value of its contents, it maintained its own force of janitors, watchmen, repairmen, and elevator men, so that no other department would be responsible or have keys. In the late '90s, a new set of locks was installed on the library doors, and only four keys to its main entrance existed: one for the head janitor, one for the night watchman, one for the director of the library, and one which was locked up elsewhere in the Capitol for emergencies. Either a janitor or a watchman was on duty in the library at all hours.

At the turn of the century, the State Library's holdings numbered 437,733 volumes. The average annual increments required nearly a mile of new shelving each year and this was pieced in with bare boards. Nearly 200,000 books "nailed up in boxes" were stored in a rented malthouse. The hope of utilizing two large attic spaces in the Capitol for storage—the lofts above the Assembly and Senate Chambers—soon went glimmering. They were needed instead for ventilating ducts. The cockloft of the southwest tower (or pavilion) of the Capitol was eventually made available as a lecture room for the Library School and for Regents meetings; this was designated as the seventh floor—three levels higher than what initially had been considered the top floor of the building.

All in all, it was about as Dewey said: "There is hardly a library in christendom that has not made the mistake of allowing too little room for future additions . . . The costly mistake has invariably been made of delaying the commencement of work on the new building till it is impossible to complete it properly by the time it is needed, and there is the resulting waste and inconvenience in administration which serves as a warning to others."

Talk of a new and separate building for the State Library was in the open by the start of 1897—barely 7 years after it had so proudly occupied the apartments which had been especially designed for it. By that time the Capitol's space was already overflowing and State departments were leasing offices elsewhere. Not only had the library abandoned hope for more space; several of its most-used rooms were being usurped by Senate committees. A commonly expressed sentiment was to the effect that "the great rich State of New York, owning by far the finest State Library on the continent, can afford a suitable, permanent, fireproof building for its use, and ought not to be willing to tuck it away in the attic of an administrative building."

* * * *

As a rule, annual reports make for dull reading, whether of corporations, garden clubs, or libraries. Not so those of the State Library during the years when Dewey was its director. He could be depended upon for a turn of propagandizing for his schemes, a vivid expression of opinion, even a literary flourish now and then. In his 1897 report occurs this prophetic passage:

> The magnificent western staircase which we have been announcing as 'nearly finished' for the last nine years is at last done. As we look at it with pride and admiration we involuntarily hum the *Nunc Dimittis;* for, curiously, with its completion, after having struggled so many years to fit these quarters for economical and satisfactory library administration, we must now make our plans for a new building and must, indeed, after having seen the completion of this monumental work, 'depart in peace' and leave it for others to enjoy. (Note: the *Nunc Dimittis* is a church canticle with the opening words, "Now lettest thou depart").

Whenever discussion of a State Library building came up, one site was mentioned: the block between the Capitol and Swan Street on the west, bounded north and south by Washington Avenue and State Street. At that time this area was full of deteriorating buildings, business and residential. (Today it is the open plaza separating the Capitol and the Governor Alfred E. Smith State Office Building.)

On February 22, 1898, a bill was introduced in the Assembly entitled "An Act authorizing the acquiring of a site for the state library building." Although this was not mentioned in the bill, some thought was being given to a sharing of the building between the State Library and the State Museum. The belongings of the State Museum were widely asunder, though much of its valuable Iroquois Indian collection was on exhibit in glass cases along the fourth-floor corridor of the Capitol outside the library.

The bill would have appropriated $400,000 for purchase of the "lands and tenements" in the space west of the Capitol. The city of Albany would have been authorized to close and discontinue Congress Street, a short east-west street bisecting the block. As a follow-up to the introduction of the bill, the Assembly directed the superintendent of public buildings, H. H. Bender, to ascertain "with all convenient speed, as to the adequacy of that portion of the state capitol assigned to the use and occupancy of the state library, for its present needs and its probable future requirements." Bender reported that there was not sufficient shelf room for the books, "and as I am informed and believe that these books are accumulating rapidly, it is fair to assume that some arrangements for their accommodation will have to be made in the very near future."

Despite legislative motions, the bill for acquisition of a site fell by the wayside. It was reintroduced for a third time in 1901, each time dying in committee. It was simply omitted in 1902 and 1903.

Dewey kept reiterating the urgency, and said in 1904: "I should be content with a great fireproof storehouse, properly arranged, lighted and heated for our work without spending a dollar for beautiful architecture or to gratify State pride."

Commissioner Draper is often referred to as "father" of the State Education Building, and so he was, in the sense of bringing the project to a head and steering it to completion. In reality, he picked up a proposal which had been lurking around for years prior to his assumption of office. In one of his earliest messages to the Board of Regents, Draper directed attention to the fact that the rooms provided for the nearly 300 employees of the Education Department were wholly inadequate, and that a considerable number of the workers were sequestered in tower rooms "from which escape would be very difficult, if not impossible, in case of fire." The Regents voted a resolution in December 1905, which stated:

> . . . the needs of the Education Department and particularly of the State Library and State Museum for better accommodations are very serious . . . The growth of the State Library is being arrested for lack of room,

> and the historic collections of the Library are not so well accommodated or made as serviceable to students as they clearly should be. This is a hindrance to the uniform development of the State which it can not afford and to which the people are opposed. The Board of Regents also represents to the responsible authorities the very great desirability of housing all of the interests in charge of the Education Department in a separate and distinctive building, which will not only promote administrative efficiency but stand in the popular mind for the interest, wisdom and aggressiveness of the State concerning intellectual and moral advancement.

This time positive action resulted. The 1906 Legislature passed "An act providing for the acquisition of a site and for the erection of a State Education Building, providing for the State Library, State Museum, and making an appropriation therefor." Governor Frank W. Higgins signed it into law on May 31.

It was a momentous law, in that its outcome was the first governmental structure ever erected in the United States for the exclusive purposes of an education department, State or Federal.

The measure provided $400,000 for the purchase of a site. The trustees of public buildings were instructed to choose "a suitable site near the Capitol." The State architect was to prepare a general floor plan, after which a design competition for architects would be advertised.

The site selected was not the same as that originally considered for a library building, west of the Capitol. Instead, the trustees decided on the long city block diagonally northwest from the Capitol, facing Washington Avenue between Swan and Hawk Streets.

The design competition was won by a New York City architectural firm, Palmer & Hornbostel. In actuality, the designer was the junior partner of the firm, Henry Hornbostel, who had studied in Paris and was a bold innovator. He proposed a building of Greek neoclassic flavor, with 36 huge Corinthian-style columns marching the entire length of the block—the longest colonnade in history. The Legislature appropriated $3,500,000 for the construction, and the main contract went to R. T. Ford & Company, of Rochester. Ground was broken on July 27, 1908. The contract called for completion by January 1, 1911.

Now at last the State Library would come into its own. In effect, the Education Building was to be erected around the library, which would be given the dominant position. It was to have for itself the entire second floor of the elongated structure, and the principal storage space for books would be in seven levels of stacks beneath the main reading room, descending 30 feet below ground level. The Library School would be given much of the third floor. Needless to say, the library staff was jubilant.

Burns Photography, Inc.

Dr. Andrew Sloan Draper, who as the first Education Commissioner of New York fathered the Education Building and a new home for the State Library. This sculpture of him, by Charles Keck. is in the lobby of the Education Building.

Shortly before ground-breaking, Edwin H. Anderson resigned as librarian to take the position of assistant director of the New York Public Library (he was later elevated to director of that great institution). Draper recommended for his successor, after "a painstaking search," James Ingersoll Wyer, Jr. It happened that Wyer was already in the service of the State Library, having joined it in 1906 as reference librarian and vice-director of the Library School. A native of Red Wing, Minnesota, he had attended the University of Minnesota and the University of Nebraska, and had graduated from the New York Library School in 1898; later returning for a master's degree in Library Science. Between-times he had been a bank cashier in Minnesota and Kansas. Wyer's appointment became effective June 1, 1908.

* * * *

All did not go well with the construction of the new building. On one frigid occasion, the State's supervisor in charge halted work during a period of zero weather to prevent inferior construction. Then the contractor had difficulty with soil conditions that delayed foundation work, and was granted a time extension for completion, to September 17, 1911.

In June 1909, Commissioner Draper reported his anxiety "about the safe-keeping of our invaluable collection of historical documents," of which the library had some 260,000, and which were subject to "many dangers from fire, handling, or even theft." Unfortunately, the bulk of them would have to wait for the new library for better storage, but Draper at that time ordered a select few items brought down to the main office of the Department on the first floor, where he "arranged a special safe for their accommodation." These items were enclosed in leather cases before being stowed in the safe.

In March 1909, Dr. Harlan Hoyt Horner, chief of the administration division of the Education Department, sent a memo to the superintendent of public buildings in which he said:

> I beg to advise you that the section included in the north end of the State Library between the third and fifth floors, is without any available means of extinguishing fire. This section includes much pine and oak shelving filled with books and pamphlets. Here is also located the Library bindery with much inflammable material used in this work. Short-circuiting of electric wires or many other causes could easily start a fire which would quickly pass from one stack to another and from floor to floor before the city fire department could get water to that height in the building. Hand extinguishers would be of little use in fighting such a fire when well started.

On March 6, 1911, Draper protested to the Trustees of Public Buildings "what seems to me to be the dilatory course of the contractors upon the Education Building." He urged the trustees to "take steps which will accelerate their movements," and said: "It is now more than two months after the time when, according to the original contract, we had the right to expect that we would be in possession of the building. Yet the building is very far from being finished, and the work moves with exasperating slowness and apparent indifference. . . . It must be said that there is a constant menace to the invaluable historical manuscripts and other collections in the State Library through the lack of suitable provision for their care. . . ."

16. Alarm in the Night

The elderly night watchman, Samuel J. Abbott, was somewhere in the upper levels of the southwest pavilion in the small hours of Wednesday, March 29, 1911. No one will ever know whether he was doing his rounds or had dozed off in the fourth-floor cubicle which served as headquarters for the watch. Newspapers leaned to the latter theory; otherwise he must have detected what was occurring on the opposite side of the Capitol earlier than he obviously did.

Sam Abbott, a Civil War veteran, was 78 years old and growing feeble. By the rules, a night watchman locked himself into the State Library, to keep others out, and visited each main room once every hour from closing at night until opening in the morning. A clock-punching system had been eliminated not long before. Even if Abbott had conscientiously made his hourly check, however, it is unlikely he would have seen anything soon enough to alter the event.

The Assembly library, which doubled as a committee-room for the Assembly Judiciary Committee, had no connection with the State Library. It opened off the east-west corridor of the third floor, around the corner from the north-south corridor which gave access to the main entrance of the State Library. A matter of a hundred feet past the door of the Assembly library was a rear door into the Assembly Chamber.

The Assembly Chamber had been tenanted this night until nearly 1 a.m. with another in a tedious series of caucuses by Democratic Legislators who were deadlocked on the choice of a U. S. Senator (this was before direct election of Senators). The deadlock had been created by a small band of insurgents led by a young freshman Senator out of Dutchess County named Franklin D. Roosevelt, who refused to accept the Tammany Hall nominee. The Roosevelt rebels had met at his rented house in Albany, while Senator Robert F. Wagner, Sr., and Assemblyman Alfred E. Smith alternated on the rostrum of the Assembly Chamber. After four more futile ballots, the Legislators had wearily adjourned and retired to their hotels.

Dwight Goewey, proofreader for the Assembly, worked unduly late because of the caucus. It was after 2 o'clock when he went back to the Assembly library to close his desk and call it a night. As he opened the door, a cloud of smoke greeted him, and dimly through it he saw flames licking up the bookshelves behind his desk. Goewey slammed the door and ran all the way back through the Assembly Chamber and into a corridor beyond. The cross-corridor was dubbed Park Row because it was lined by the booths used by legislative correspondents. (Park Row was the noted newspaper street of New York City.) Two newsmen were still on duty, filing stories to New York papers about the caucus. One of them was Louis McHenry Howe, who had taken a quick liking to the youthful Senator Roosevelt for his defiance of the political bigwigs. This began the fateful relationship in which Howe became the "President-maker."

The correspondents heard Goewey yelling for a watchman and thrust out their heads to ask "What's the trouble?"

"There's a fire in the Assembly library," he replied, "and I'm afraid it may be a bad one."

Neither reporter had the presence of mind to pick up a telephone and report it. Both dropped what they were doing and ran for the Assembly library, accompanied by H. S. Gorham, manager for Postal Telegraph in the Capitol. "We looked in the room," said Howe, "and saw the desk in the southwest corner ablaze. The fire at this time could have been easily put out with a pail or two of water. We searched in vain for anything to serve the purpose and finally decided to close the door and keep out the draft." (In the nearby State Library, whose doors were locked, the fire extinguishers had been freshly reserviced.)

Goewey returned with Colonel John Mullins, the only watchman besides Abbott on duty in the vast building. Mullins took a scared look and bolted all the way down two long flights of stairs and outdoors to yank an alarm box in the street. It took 25 minutes for firemen to arrive and snake hose-lines up the Great Western staircase to the third floor.

Meanwhile the Assembly library had become a furnace. Flames exploded through its glass transom and through rear windows to leap catercorner across an airshaft and into the State Library corridor from that direction, as well. The wooden mezzanine over the north section of the corridor, with its burden of books, took fire on the instant. The newsmen beat a retreat to where the Senate corridor turns off at right angles, and watched from there.

Until now the fire chief was confident of keeping the fire out of the State Library. His most seasoned men were incredulous that flames could be spreading so fast

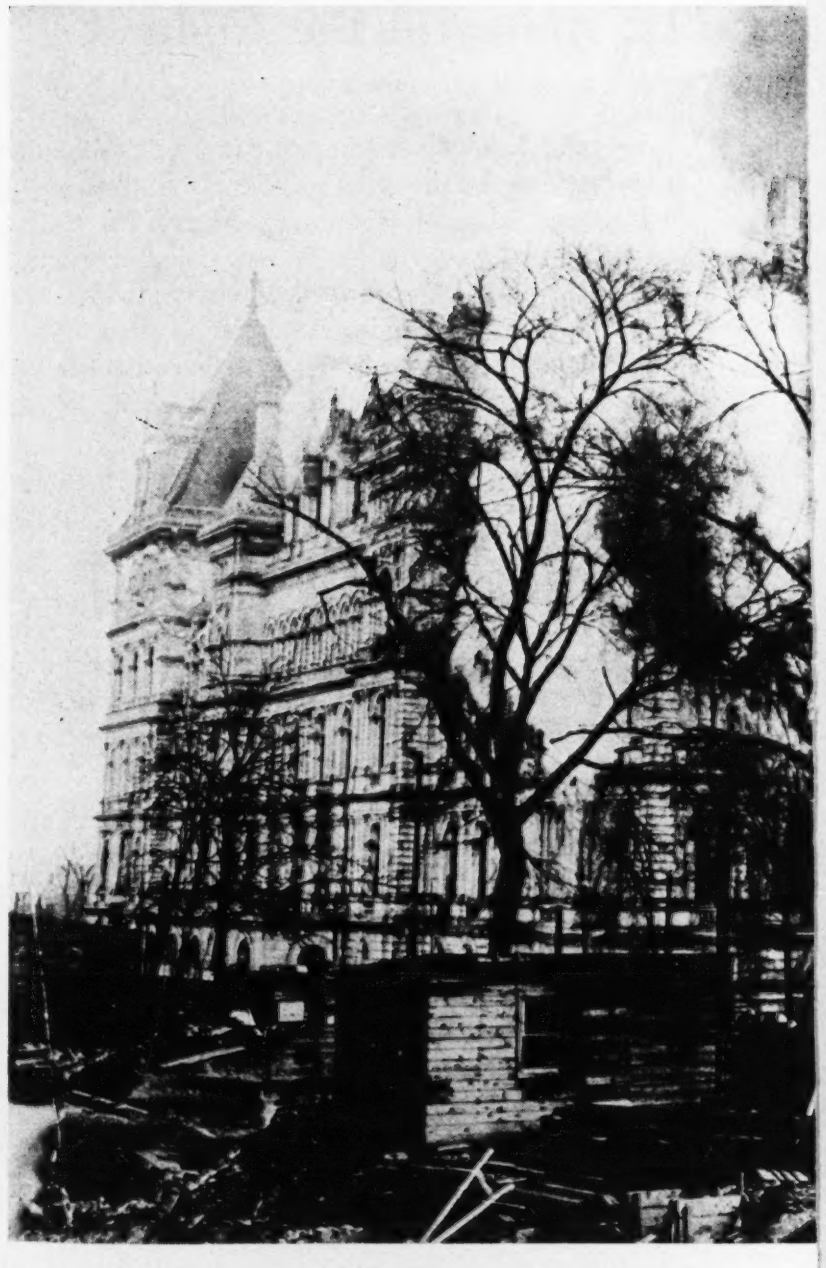
before their very eyes in such a reputedly fireproof building. The stone partition was thick between the corridor and the library, the only breach being the central door to the main reading room and a high row of window panes above it. Firemen played three streams into the wall of fire, expecting to confine it to the north half of the corridor. Perhaps thinking they could defend the library better from its interior, Chief William W. Bridgeford had the watchman, Mullins, fetch the emergency key. Sam Abbott was inside somewhere, but had not been seen. If he had been moving about or heard the commotion, he certainly had time to have come out before this.

Mullins was fumbling with the key at the heavy oaken door when a sheet of fire swept along the arched ceiling of the corridor. The high windows burst and a draft seemed to suck the flames into the library, where they leaped from shelf to shelf. The chief ordered his men to get inside the reading room "if it were possible to live there," and work their way south to head off the blaze. They tried to rush in, but heat scorched their hands so they couldn't hold on to the nozzles.

With successive changes and additions to gain space, the library had become a rabbit-warren of mezzanine platforms, odd corridors, dead-end passageways, recesses, and galleries. It was estimated to have a hundred rooms, large and small, counting the cubbyholes. Wierdly contrived work spaces sometimes required minutes to reach, via zigzag stairs and miniature elevators. The bewildering maze of passages acted like chimney flues to spread the flames with maddening rapidity. People familiar with the library speculated grimly on what might have been the story if a flash fire had broken out in daytime while people were at work in some of those remote nooks. In the words of one journalist, "death would have held high carnival."

Once the fire had invaded the reading room, it was clear that the State Library would have to be written off. Its own firefighting equipment was worthless. "A tidal wave of water was needed then," wrote an observer. Firemen concentrated their efforts henceforth upon saving the rest of the Capitol. In the opinion of Chief Bridgeford, if the fire had captured either of the legislative chambers the entire building would have gone. As a matter of fact, it did get into the loft over the Assembly Chamber but was contained there, not without grievous insult to the ornate chamber.

By 4 o'clock in the morning, the State Library was an inferno from end to end, its precious contents having become a mass of fuel to feed flames bursting through the roof and mounting awesomely high into the dark heaven. The whole city was illuminated with



the eery light, its populace awake and thronging to Capitol Hill. Said Louis Howe, in his account written for the New York *Telegram:* "Coming from what had always appealed to Albanians as a mass of stone and unburnable material, it was terrifying." More than one sleepy-eyed resident, upon answering his telephone and being told the Capitol was burning, mistook the call for a premature April Fool's prank, and made some such reply as: "Nonsense, that pile of rocks couldn't burn!"

Flying sheets of scorched paper—historical manuscripts and pages out of books—flecked the sky over Albany "like snowflakes" and drifted to earth over a 20-mile radius. They were picked up and kept as mementos by many finders. Two land patents dating from the early 1700's were retrieved blocks away from the Capitol. Several papers of the Revolutionary Committee of Safety were blowing around the streets down near

Firemen were still pouring streams of water through windows of the State Library the morning after fire wrecked the west portion of the Capitol in March, 1911. In the foreground may be seen construction sheds of the Education Building. By terms of the contract, the building should have been finished before this.

the waterfront. A man in New York City received in the mail a charred piece of paper sent him by an Albany friend for a souvenir. Recognizing it as a colonial manuscript, he mailed it to the State librarian.

A member of the family with whom Samuel Abbott boarded nearby elbowed his way up to a Capitol guard about 3 a.m. and asked if anyone had seen Mr. Abbott. "Oh, yes," the guard replied, "he's all right. I saw him opening windows."

The pyramidal roof of the southwest tower, where the Library School was domiciled, caved in around 4 a.m. Shortly thereafter, the first official of the Education Department arrived on the scene. This was Dr. Harlan Hoyt Horner, one-time secretary to Commissioner Draper and now chief of the examination division. His immediate thought was for the safety of the handpicked documents and relics which, by the Commissioner's order, had been brought down from the library and locked in a tall safe in the Regents Room. While this safe was on the first floor, and the fire never crept lower than the third floor, it was by no means certain that it would not do so. The safe was fireproof, but Horner feared that intense heat around it could crumble the documents inside. No one but Commissioner Draper had the combination to the safe, and he carried it at all times in his pocket. Horner called Draper at his home and asked for the combination. Draper refused to give it over the telephone, and his crippled condition prevented his coming in person. Instead, he sent his son downtown with it.

Meanwhile, Horner had found a large basket in the mailroom. After getting the safe open, he dumped its contents into the basket, and, aided by young Draper at the other handle, lugged it to the nearby residence of an insurance company executive who volunteered to safeguard it. In that basket were the drafts of the Emancipation Proclamation and Washington's Farewell Address, the Charles II Charter, the Arnold-André "spy papers," and the Washington relics. One Washington possession not there was the dress sword; it had been too long to fit in the safe, and had been taken back upstairs and stowed in a closet of the library. The following day, Draper had the articles placed in a safe deposit box at a local bank until further notice. Actually, they had been in no real danger—but they might have been.

Not a single book or manuscript was rescued from the library proper while the fire was raging. This fact occasioned some acid comment. The New York *Post* reporter who had been on the scene with Howe wrote, for instance: "Had there been anyone on hand to do the work, many of the priceless books and records in the library could have been saved. One of the most striking facts of the fire was the total inefficiency or inadequacy of the employees of the State Superintendent of Buildings. They stood about idly in groups on the first floor of the building, but they did not venture above stairs." (This may have been an unfair criticism; once the fire was inside the library, even the firemen could not remain.)

If a guard had indeed seen Samuel J. Abbott opening windows, he was the last to see him alive. Two days passed before his body, charred almost beyond recognition, was found beneath a pile of rubble on the fourth floor. From its position, the old man seemingly had been trying to reach a door to escape into the corridor when overcome by smoke. Governor John A. Dix attended his funeral. The Legislature appropriated $762.74 to cover the funeral and burial costs "and other expenses incidental to the finding of the body."

The day after the fire, National Guardsmen moved in and clamped the Capitol under martial law. Their patrol duty applied especially to the library section of the building, which was a sorry spectacle with its heaps of black, steaming, water-sodden ruins. New fires kept breaking out sporadically for days to come. It was necessary to protect the rubbish from scavengers. Library officials—some of whom wept unashamedly when they viewed the sight—began thinking at once of what they might salvage.

In the smoky aftermath, a stunned city and State might console themselves upon still having their costly Capitol, even though it was sorely damaged. But they had lost their splendid State Library—and only after the calamity did the majority of the population begin to understand how large and important a library it had been. Before, the average man-in-the-street, as well as most newspapers, had a tendency to think of the State Library as "a room on the third floor of the Capitol"; now they awakened to the astonishing fact that it had been rated fifth among libraries of the United States, and that it had stood among the 20 largest in the world. When the magnitude of the loss was comprehended, the taxpaying public was in a mood to support a full-scale restoration.

What had happened in the night was the greatest library disaster of modern times. Gone were 450,000 books and 270,000 manuscripts. While most books could be replaced, the manuscripts could not, and among them were countless original documents relating to the origins of New Netherlands and the New York colony. Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, of the Carnegie Institution, pronounced it the most serious catastrophe "that has ever befallen American historical material." Moreover, the entire catalog—nearly a million cards—was gone. The whole administrative apparatus, built up over almost a century, was destroyed. Records of outstanding orders were burned, so that obligations for book purchases were unknown. Mailing and exchange lists dealing with hundreds of institutions throughout the world were as if they had not existed.

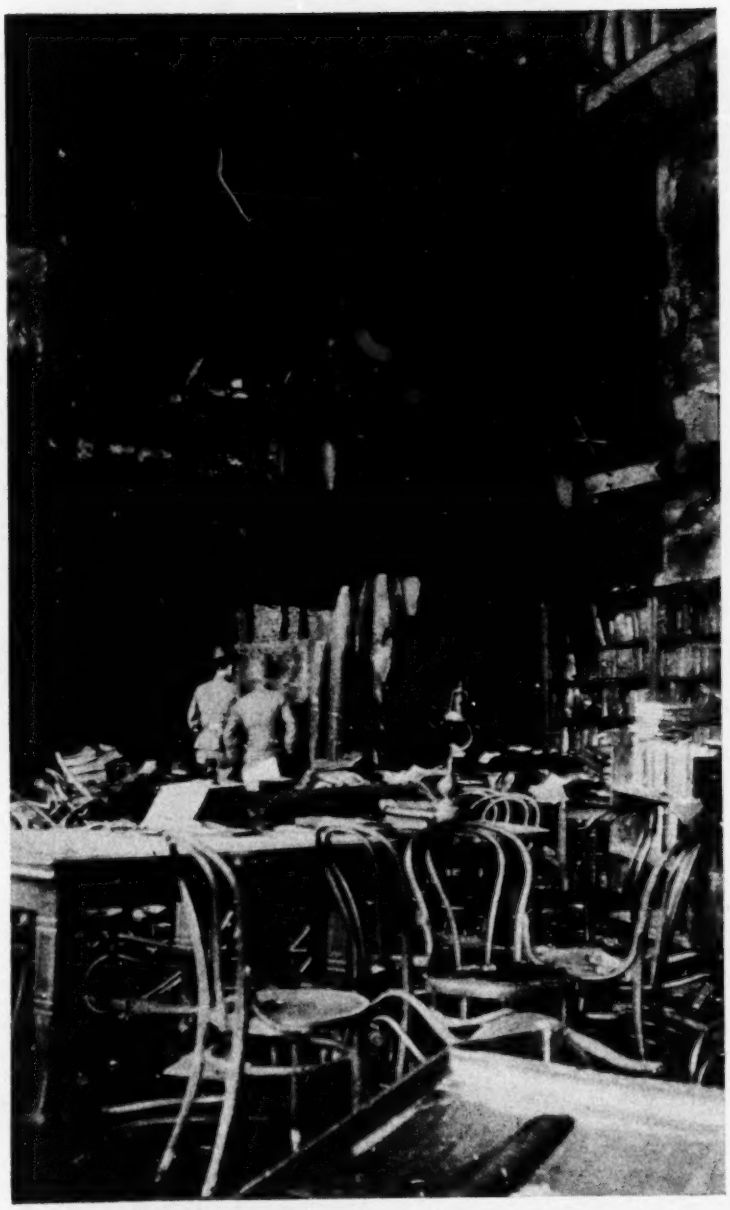
From the Melvil Dewey Papers at the Columbia University Library.

Cooling down the ruins inside the library.

From the Melvil Dewey Papers at the Columbia University Library.

Not all the books burned, as shown in this smoke-dimmed view of the devastated reading room.

Three glimpses of the twisted beams and rubble in what had been the magnificent State Library.



The main reading room was a pathetic sight after the fire. The intensity of the heat may be judged by the disintegration of the granite pillars being inspected by the two National Guardsmen, and of the sandstone arches overhead. The circular metal framework is all that remains of the clock. (See photos on pages 56 and 57.)

More than incidentally, the State Museum had also sustained a grievous blow. The famed Lewis H. Morgan collection of American Indian relics, particularly costumes, had been on exhibit in the library corridor. Fortunately, the Iroquois wampum belts which the tribes had entrusted to the State for safekeeping were in a bank vault.

A charred letter was blown into the vestibule of a house near the Capitol. The woman who retrieved it found it to be a letter addressed to Melvil Dewey while he was State librarian. She mailed it to him at the Lake Placid Club for a souvenir. The reply was several weeks in coming. Dewey wrote: "They didn't tell me of the fire till it was ancient history." The news was withheld because he had been gravely ill. The rest of what he had to say was merely this: "Of course I feel it keenly to have that magnificent library, to which I gave 17 of the best years of my life, utterly destroyed. But perhaps it will teach a lesson to the rest of the world."

* * * *

Naturally, the question of cause was on the tip of every tongue. The first theory publicly mentioned was defective wiring, and reporters promptly sought out the functionaries responsible for building inspection of the Capitol. (Since no insurance whatever was carried on the Capitol or the library, it had not been subject to the inspection of underwriters.) The inspectors vehemently denied that bad wiring had anything to do with it, and were quoted as saying "it was more likely that a cigar or cigarette carelessly thrown behind a desk started the fire." Whether it was this statement that planted it or not, the rumor of the cigar butt tossed in a wastebasket persists to the present day. Along with it goes the assertion that the political caucus was held in the room where the fire started, which is untrue: the caucus was held in the Assembly Chamber, at some distance from the Assembly library. Of course, that does not preclude the possibility that someone strolled into the Assembly library.

The weight of evidence is on the side of defective wiring. The Capitol still had the antique wiring which had been installed 25 years before, when electric lights were new. Elwood Blair, former deputy superintendent of public buildings, told the press his office had called attention to bad wiring in several annual reports, but that money to replace it had been steadily denied. He said that he did not believe any company would write insurance on a building wired as the Capitol was. At a meeting of the trustees of public buildings on April 6, the State architect, Franklin B. Ware, gave his opinion that the fire had been caused by fused electric wires, and recommended rewiring the entire building.

Governor Dix, on his own initiative, engaged an electrical engineer from New York to make an inspection after the fire. This man reported on April 8 that the "entire electrical equipment is antiquated." He found much wiring laid directly in plaster and woodwork. In some instances, light wires and bell wires were in intimate contact, passing through the same holes. In brief, Governor Dix did not wait for legislative sanction to order all the old wiring yanked out and new wiring installed.

State Librarian James I. Wyer, in his report on the fire, said: "The fire, resulting from an all-night legislative

caucus in the Assembly chamber, got a good start." . . . He did not elaborate. If the State librarian had any evidence that the caucus was the cause, it would seem that he owed it to posterity to lay it on the line. Lacking proof, his guess was probably no better than that of the man from Sharon Springs who told the Secretary of State: "Democratic friction caused the fire. All other alleged causes grew out of wild rumors."

While a considerable amount of salvage was possible, the havoc wrought in documents of the utmost historical value was devastating. The major part of the Governor George Clinton and the Sir William Johnson papers were obliterated; along with the Van Rensselaer "Manor Papers" which had been transferred into the library from the Albany County clerk's office only a few years previously, after protracted efforts to obtain them. Seven file boxes containing original parchments of Indian treaties from 1788 to 1822 were immolated. The letters of Colonel John Bradstreet and General Sir Jeffrey Amherst had gone up in smoke, and so had the papers of Governor Daniel Tompkins. The list of losses is sickening to contemplate, even from this distance.

Nor was the destruction confined to books and manuscripts. A "marvelous" collection of newspaper files dating from colonial times, thousands of volumes, had vanished. The library had been a veritable art gallery of portraits and busts. The most valuable painting in the Capitol was an original Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington, and the oils burned well. Four portraits of the Indian sachems taken to England in 1710 by Peter Schuyler, the paintings commissioned by Queen Anne, also hung on the library walls.

Of course, the three great iron links of the West Point chain came through the fire unscathed. The library's outstanding coin collection was scattered, and souvenir seekers combed the rubble for weeks looking for rare coins. Governor Dix displayed on his desk a lump of silver "as big as two fists", which was a fused mass of melted coins. Some 2,000 coins were ultimately recovered, but many hundreds were missing. Wagons carted the rubble, as fast as it was sorted and sifted, to a municipal dump in Beaver Park, where men and boys were seen pawing over the piles for some time to come. Commissioner Draper telephoned the principal of a school near the dump, who turned his pupils loose to look for coins in the debris. That night the principal sent Draper about 20 coins.

Messages of sympathy, many with a tone almost of condolence on the death of a relative, poured in from all over the world—from other libraries, from government and university officials, and from library scholars. Some were from persons who had been doing research in the library, anxious to know if the papers in their particular areas of interest had been lost. From M. Wada, head of the Library of the Imperial University of Tokyo, came the cablegram: "Herewith I beg to express my deepest sympathy for the loss of the New York State Library by the recent fire." Numerous other libraries were prompt in offering assistance out of their duplicate stocks.

In a printed leaflet addressed "To All Concerned in the Intellectual Progress of New York," Commissioner Draper said: ". . . we are not dismayed. We will gather up the ruins and cherish and make the most of them; and we will lay broader and stronger foundations and erect a superstructure on nobler and richer lines than the old Library had."

* * * *

The staggering irony of it all was that, if the contractor for the Education Building had met the deadline for its completion specified in the contract, the State Library would have been out of the Capitol and secure in its new abode when the fire struck.

A resolution of the Board of Regents, adopted during April, protested the delay and said: ". . . if the contract had been performed as entered into, the loss of the State Library and other divisions of the Education Department would have been averted. The Board of Regents desires to be informed as to the cause of the intolerable delay to the end that the responsibility may be located and the rights of the State enforced."

The trustees of public buildings cracked a whip at the R. T. Ford Company, saying "sufficient progress is not being made" on the Education Building, even in view of the extended deadline; and that "The trustees insist that you immediately substantially increase your force and progress your work in all its branches." If this was not done, the State threatened to exact damages of $1,000 a day, as provided for in the contract, in case of noncompletion.

In reconstruction of the Capitol, installation of more adequate firefighting equipment was of high priority. The R. T. Ford Company submitted the low bid for this contract, to put in stand-pipes, hose, and reels. Because of the slow performance of this firm on the Education Building, the State rejected the Ford Company's bid and awarded the contract to the second lowest bidder.

17. Rebirth

On the sceond morning after the tragedy, a tall, bearded, aristocratically groomed man stepped down from a pullman car at the Albany station. Riding uphill to the smoke-shrouded Capitol, he found flames still darting out from gutted space which had been the State Library—firemen still pouring jets of water through paneless windows. It was hard for him to realize that he had been calmly doing research in there just a few weeks earlier. Somberly, he walked around to the front of the building and made his way to the Executive Chamber.

The visitor was I. N. Phelps Stokes (the initials signified Isaac Newton) who, within a few years, would be noted as author of the monumental *Iconography of Manhattan Island*. He came as an emissary from the trustees of the New York Public Library with a message of sympathy for Governor John A. Dix and officials of the State Library, and to proffer help. His talk with the Governor concentrated upon measures for saving whatever might be redeemable out of the ruins, and Mr. Dix asked if he would be willing to direct the task. Stokes had a smattering of experience along that line, from having assisted with the salvage of some manuscripts from the Turin library fire.

Phelps Stokes had no need to scramble for a living. A millionaire by inheritance from his banker father, he was a Socialist by political persuasion, and enacted a variety of roles as an architect, a housing expert, philanthropist, settlement worker, clubman, historian, and man of letters. Now he cast himself in the role of "boss cinder sorter," to use his own phrase.

As yet, no scrap of the library wreckage had been touched. Some 250 militiamen of the New York National Guard patrolled the Capitol, barring entrance to the stricken west portion by anyone without a military pass. At that point it was dubious if any of the contents could be reclaimed. Witnesses who had watched the fire told Stokes that an incredible tongue of flame had burst from a window of the manuscript room, reaching halfway across the street; because of this, it was the common belief that nothing could possibly have survived in that room.

Stokes was of a different opinion, however, and consulted with A. J. Van Laer, who, as library archivist for 12 years past, could virtually pinpoint where the remnants of each major collection would be, if there were any remains.

A. J. F. Van Laer was a native Hollander, born and bred in Utrecht, who had been doing the State Library —and American history at large—a noteworthy service in the translation and editing of the colonial Dutch documents. Coming to the United States in the early '90s, primarily to visit relatives in Philadelphia, he had fulfilled a desire to see Albany because of its Dutch origins. While there, he discovered the hoard of manuscript material, as yet untranslated, in the State Library. He acquainted himself with George R. Howell, then the archivist. Howell persuaded him to assist with the deciphering, and thus Van Laer entered a lifetime career. He enrolled in the Library School, graduating in 1899, in which year Howell died and he was appointed to succeed him. His most useful achievement to date had been the translation of the Van Rensselaer-Bowier manuscripts, lent to the State for that purpose by the Bowier family of Holland and rushed to publication in time for the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909. Fortunately, the collection had been returned to its owners before the fire.

Stokes argued vehemently that not a moment should be lost in finding out if there were any salvage. Even one day's delay could mean further destruction of any papers buried in a smoldering heap. Torrents of water had been poured into the library, and since compressed paper, as in a book, is fire-resistant, Stokes speculated that documents on the lower shelves may have been shielded by sodden rubbish falling from above. Van Laer agreed with him that it was urgent for them to make a reconnaissance, even though that part of the building had been proclaimed unsafe. Governor Dix consented and ordered the National Guard to cooperate.

The immediate problem was how to get into the Manuscripts Section. The room, about 40 feet long and 15 feet wide, ran crosswise of the south end of the library on the third floor. Its normal approaches were impassable. Stairways inside the library were gone. After studying the building plans, Stokes and Van Laer determined to tackle the problem from above with ladders. Cautiously preceded by two firemen with a hose, they climbed down amid a tangle of warped beams and rivulets of black water. The weather had turned sharply cold, so that dripping icicles were forming. The circumstances were as physically uncomfortable as they were hazardous.

Reaching the charred door of the archives room, the firemen pushed through a panel. The opening let in a

draft which fanned up a blaze in the litter, and the hose was turned upon it. "The sight," to quote Van Laer, "was appalling. Not a vestige of books, bookcases or desks was to be seen. Nothing but an empty shell, with four feet of smoldering debris on the floor. Fires were starting up in various places. . . and water poured down from the floor above. It seemed well-nigh hopeless to attempt to rescue anything under the conditions." Still, Van Laer singled out a location where some Dutch records might be buried, and they removed the overlay. Charred paper on the surface was frozen into clumps. Deep down in the mess, they came to paper which, though charred around the margins, contained decipherable writing.

Hurrying back to the Executive Chamber, Stokes and Van Laer reported to Governor Dix that there was salvageable material, and sketched out a plan of operation. Several large clothes-baskets were borrowed from a laundry across the park. A line of National Guardsmen formed a basket brigade. Rescued papers were carefully laid in the baskets and passed along to safety. Often the documents were too hot to hold in the hand and were burning around the edges when removed. So thick was the smoke, as described by Stokes in his private memoirs, that sometimes "we could hardly see across the room." A detail he omitted was that twice, during the long day's miserable labor that ensued, Stokes was overcome by the smoke and had to be carried out for revival; and that each time he insisted upon returning to the task.

The personal dangers under which the salvage activities were carried on, this day and later, are not to be minimized. Bricks and chunks of stone and mortar kept tumbling. A sentry was cut on the head by a piece of falling glass. Yet practically the entire staff of the library pitched in to help as time went on, regardless of risk, discomfort, and the ruination of clothing. Although umbrellas were finally brought in and held over Stokes and Van Laer while they worked, their garments were already soaked through, yet they continued until well after dark. For Van Laer, this kind of thing went on day after day, in the chilly April, and an associate said, "Why he didn't have pneumonia I don't know."

Van Laer was especially interested in the fate of the early records of the New Netherlands colony, as he had been in the midst of translating these at the time of the fire, having completed one volume. Both the original and the translation, he found, had been burned. But they dug out 21 charred remaining volumes of these records, of which 15 had escaped without serious damage. Van Laer resumed the translating as fast as the volumes could be restored.

Once they uncovered an object which looked like a large crumpled chamois skin or a wet sponge. Van Laer pounced upon it, wrung out the water, and sorrowfully spread it on a cleared space of the floor. He had recognized at once the original vellum charter of New York's historic Trinity Church.

After some progress, in order to make more room for the inspection, the workmen were told to throw out the debris which had already been sifted. As this was being done, Van Laer stood at the window and personally reexamined every shovelful before it went, thus recovering a few more scraps.

Some criticism of the salvage methods was heard, afterward, due to "flying papers" in the streets. Along with the cold snap had come a high wind. A layer of the material at the bottom of piles was frequently frozen to the floor so that it could not be immediately detached without tearing. A gust of wind would sometimes pick up a loose sheet and carry it off. Stokes said: ". . . the only wonder is that the wind, rushing through the gutted building, did not whirl away more of them." The State historian, Victor Hugo Paltsits, stirred up a rumpus by publicly charging carelessness in the throwing out of debris. He exhibited letters bearing the signatures of two colonial governors, James DeLancey of New York and Thomas Pownall of Massachusetts, which he said he had picked up 500 feet from the Capitol. Ironically, the Pownall letter was an appeal to the Governor of New York for help after a Boston fire, and the other was DeLancey's reply.

At one point during the first day of search, Stokes noticed a workman pick up a twisted piece of metal, show it to another who shook his head, and then toss it aside. There were fragments of distorted metal all over the room, after all, and Stokes took it to be a shelf support. Next day he heard that George Washington's dress sword was missing, and this sent his mind racing back to the discarded bit of "junk." Recalling where it had fallen, he had the men dig it out, and sure enough it was the sword, "very much out of shape."

That was the way Stokes related the episode in a lengthy interview granted the New York *Times* one month after the event. In his memoirs, written near the end of his life, he gave a slightly different and more dramatic version, saying he asked Governor Dix if there was anything he was especially interested in saving; that the Governor had replied: Yes—Washington's dress sword." Accordingly, they made a particular search for it, finding it bent almost into a bow-knot. "We straightened it out as best we could, and carried it at once to the Governor. I can see Mr. Van Laer today as he clicked his heels together and raised the

sword in salute to the Governor, who was greatly pleased."

That the Governor was pleased is beyond question. He announced the recovery in a speech, and said: "I believe it can be repaired, although it was greatly damaged." And repaired it was, although its temper was gone and its sheen forever dulled.

After an overnight rest, Stokes and Van Laer, with an augmented crew, were back on the job at 7 o'clock the following morning. During the night the debris had been hosed down again as new fires broke out. By another nightfall they felt that they had rescued everything worth saving in the manuscripts room--about 10 percent of the entire collection, Van Laer estimated, and perhaps 30 percent of "the most valuable material."

Except for some continuing advice, Stokes had made his contribution, and it was immense. Without his impetus, the commencing of salvage might have been postponed until much more was lost. Before returning to New York that weekend, he telephoned Dr. Herbert Putnam, head of the Library of Congress, asking a favor in the name of Governor Dix. Would the Library of Congress be willing to lend its "highly experienced expert restorer," William Berwick, to New York State for a period? Within 24 hours, Berwick was in Albany, where he remained for 10 days, organizing the process of manuscript restoration and instructing the library staff in how to carry it on.

Back in New York, Stokes conferred with other specialists. Immediately he wrote to Van Laer, warning him that extra care must be taken to prevent mildew and mold in the documents as they dried. He also advised of the necessity for pressing the papers during the process, saying that if enough presses could not be located in Albany, he might send some up from New York.

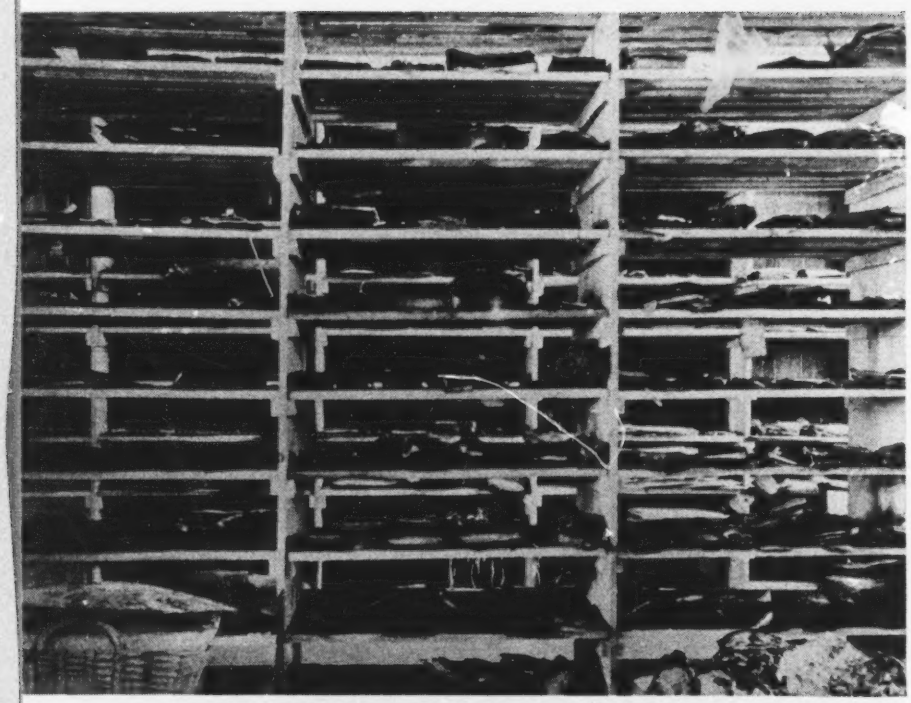
As the basketfuls of scorched paper were brought out, along with some 1,000 coins and medals, they were placed under guard in the office of the clerk of the Senate. Meanwhile, a temporary emergency headquarters for the State Library was being set up in a vacant residential building near the Capitol on upper State Street, upon which the State had taken a lease. The reference librarian, Frank L. Tolman, had been hastily preparing a series of lath racks in which the soaked sheets could be spread to dry. On Saturday of that week, the entire mass was moved into 162 State, and rehabilitation began.

For the most part, the rescued manuscripts were those which had been mounted on heavy sheets with wide margins, and they had been bound into volumes. The margins were scorched and charred and the volumes were water-soaked. The method of restoring them was to separate the sheets and place them between leaves of heavy blotting paper which were changed at 24-hour intervals. They were under pressure at each stage, to facilitate the drying and prevent wrinkling. Dirt was gently removed with camel's-hair brushes. The processing was a race with time to forestall mildew.

The house on State Street was quickly outgrown for space, and a nearby church basement was made available for drying racks. As the library was "restored"—still awaiting the new building—more space was rented from the Guild House of All Saints Cathedral, from the Catholic Union, and elsewhere.

In the meantime, the salvage work was extended to the library as a whole, where it was soon discovered that a very small percentage of books were reclaimable. The Law Library and the Medical Library had been utterly wiped out. Joseph Gavit, head of the shelf section, took it upon himself to search for the Audubon elephant folios, *Birds of America*. Cracked and frayed with time and use, these engravings had been given a special preservative treatment only a year or so before the fire: each sheet was mounted on canvas, the whole set was then divided into ten parts, and each part was placed in a separate canvas-covered case. Since then the precious set had been kept under lock and key in an oak closet set into a brick wall closing up a former doorway.

The remains of the valuable Audubon folios, Birds of America, *after being dug out of the debris by Joseph Gavit.*



Two steps in the salvaging process. The scorched manuscripts were first laid out on hastily built slat shelves. The bottom picture shows them being dried between sheets of heavy blotting paper.

Gavit summoned a couple of workmen and set them to probing the deep debris where the oak closet had been. The collapsed north stack hung overhead and bricks kept dropping around them. Dust and smoke were suffocating as they dug, and a fireman played a hose on the pile. They were close to pay-dirt when the noon whistle blew. The men dropped their shovels and went to lunch. "What was Audubon to them?" thought Gavit, and he jumped into the hole and went on digging alone. A mass of bricks fell and caved in one side of the excavation. By the time the workmen returned, Gavit was ready to hand up the "remains" of Audubon to them. A portion of the canvas was intact. Many plates were badly burned around the edges, but some with wide margins were in fair condition. "They were actual human things," Gavit mused afterward, "the actual work of a man's hands. If they had been gold, probably nobody would have heard that noonday whistle."

It fell to the lot of James I. Wyer, Jr., as director of the State Library, to suffer through its ordeal by fire and to guide it through its limbo to a much greater library than it had been before. Wyer was critical, in his report, of "a system which keeps veterans in responsible positions of watch and guard until they are seventy-five or eighty years old, which is a stranger to fire drills and sufficient patrol and which must always fail of effective esprit-de-corps." He added: "The plain lesson for libraries from the New York State Library is that no valuable collection of books should be housed in a building occupied, and ministered and cared for as are undoubtedly all the state capitol buildings in the country."

There was a morsel of consolation, at least, in the fact that the library had not been as completely obliterated as at first supposed. In starting the formidable task of reconstructing its collections, it had a foundation to build upon in the 200,000 duplicate volumes which had been in storage outside the Capitol, and in 45,000 traveling library books which had been out on loan. Dr. Wyer was able to report the salvage of some 80,000 manuscripts, but only 7,000 books, including those which were later returned by borrowers.

Beyond these relatively minor surviving assets, however, the library was going to have to start all over again, practically from scratch. When it moved into the new building, it would be, in effect, a new library. To go into the bookmarts of the world and rehabilitate itself in a reasonable time, a great deal of money would be required. And the money was forthcoming. The estimated amount needed over a period of 4 or 5 years, and proposed to the Legislature by Dr. Draper in a bill he personally drew up, was $1,250,000. The Legislature granted it without a quibble.

An Act for restoring the State Library became law on October 24, 1911. It authorized the expenditure:

> to reestablish and enlarge the State Library, by gathering suitable books, pamphlets, manuscripts and other materials for the reference library, historical library, education library, law library, medical library, technology library, and the sociological, genealogical, and other collections therefor.

The intention was not only to restore the loss and remedy the damage, but also "to create in the course of years a comprehensive State Library which will meet the varied needs of the government and the people of the State of New York."

What the Act really did was to empower the Commissioner of Education to make contracts and incur expenses up to that amount over a period of time, limiting the amount spent to $500,000 prior to October 1, 1913. It appropriated the $500,000 at once, and the figure was increased to $550,000 the following year.

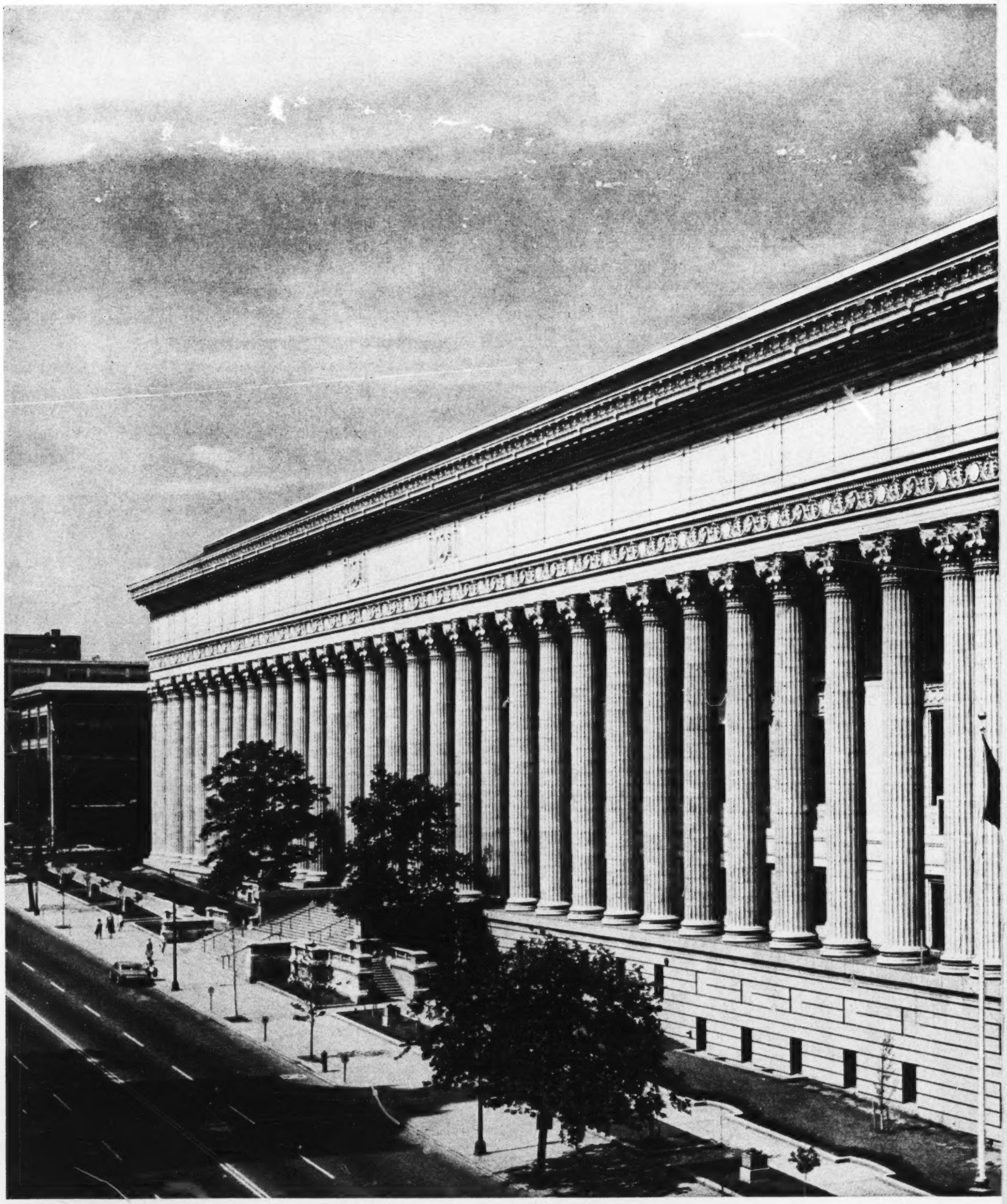
Such an allowance for the purchase of books was unprecedented. Never before had any library been handed more than a million dollars at one time to expend on its collections. The opportunity was one which might truly be called *golden*.

The first book cataloged for the revived library was a Holy Bible retrieved from the embers of the fire. It was only slightly scorched around the edges.

Wrath against the contractors on the Education Building was not concealed, and it mounted with further delays. The Board of Regents, at a meeting on June 22, 1911, voted to submit the facts to the Attorney General for an opinion on whether to cancel and annul the contract with the R. T. Ford Company and have the building completed by other contractors. The Regents pointed out that generous gifts of books were being offered from many sources, and that there was no place to put them.

The deadline for completion had been extended to September 17, 1911. August came and the R. T. Ford Company asked for another extension, pleading that a bed of quicksand had been struck near the entrance, among other problems. The extension was granted until April 1, 1912. Came April, and the deadline was again postponed until July 1.

At long last, the dates for the formal opening of the Education Building, with lavish dedication ceremonies, were announced as October 15, 16, and 17, 1912. Even then, it took hectic day-and-night work until the final minute to have the structure ready in time for the formal opening.



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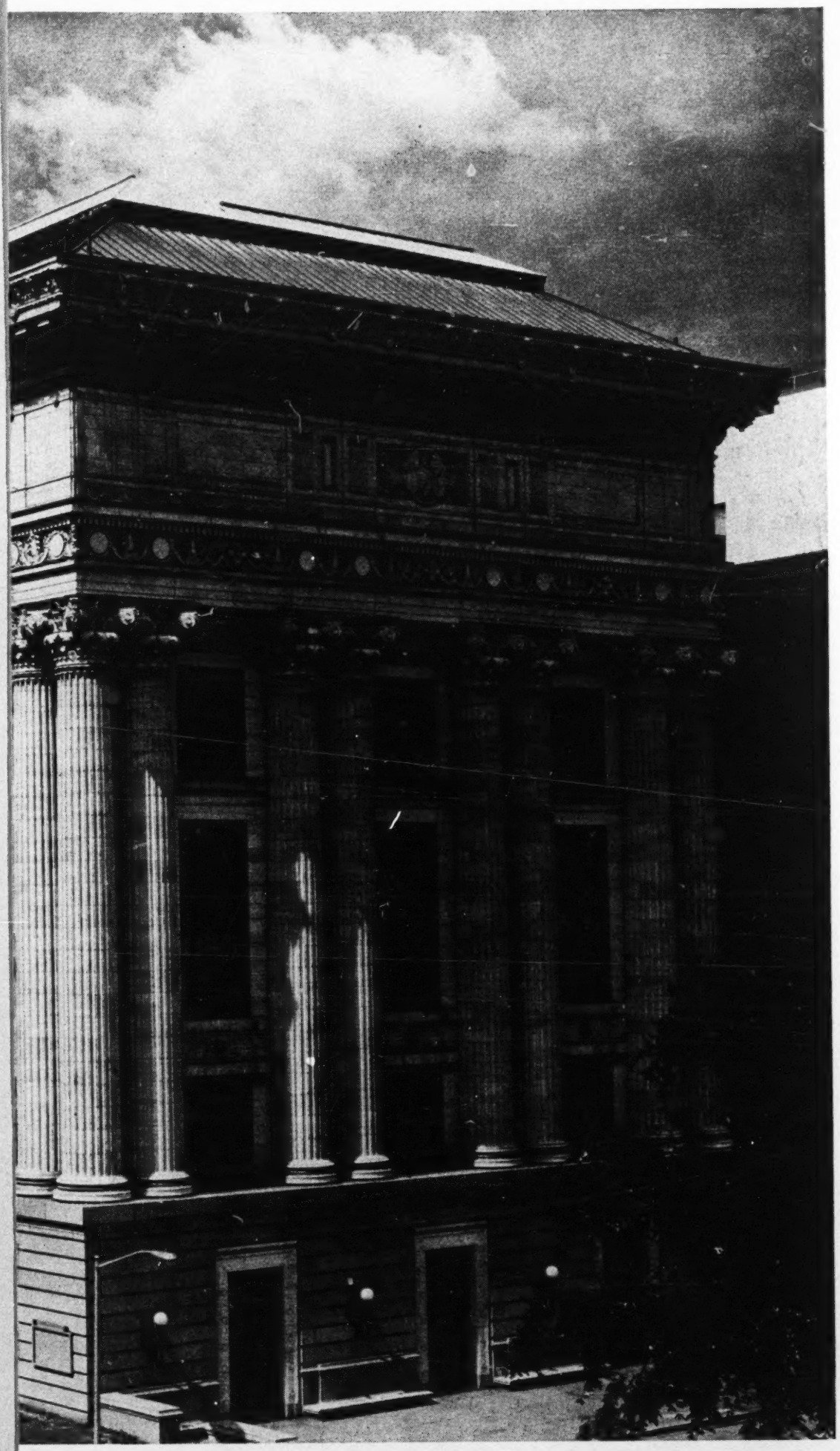

The State Education Building as it stands today. It was dedicated in October, 1912, although the State Library—its central feature—was not fully open to the public until the spring of 1913.

18. 'Again . . . A Noble Library'

For a wretched 18 months, the library which had been so richly enshrined and so widely admired was a homeless waif—its fragments and its personnel scattered around the capital city in a dozen rented makeshifts. For that while and more, New York State was, for practical purposes, without a library to call its own. This meant, of course, a sudden cutoff in its important reference aid to the Legislature and the courts, to various State departments, and to the legal and medical professions. It also meant a shattering disruption in what had been the highly organized flow of educational and intellectual services to the State at large, which had been steadily growing for more than 90 years.

In actuality, it was two years until the State Library was again fully open for public use; and then, needless to say, it was on a much reduced scale of resources for some time to come.

If its burned-out abode had indeed been the handsomest of any library's when first occupied (as Dewey had boasted), then its lexicons perhaps ought to have been combed for some fresh superlative to apply to the next one. This was to be its fifth home in a career of ups and downs, and assuredly the finest of all.

The library quarters, as previously noted, were designed as the dominant element in the Education Building. They were spatially bountiful and architecturally imaginative. (At the same time, they were carefully planned to fulfill the functional purposes of a library, and not anything else; more, for an ultra-modern library, a long way ahead of its time.)

The Education Building was one of the earliest large public buildings in the country to be fully equipped with electric elevators. A bank of six self-service elevators linked the general reading room with the book stacks beneath it. Another innovation was the placing of separate upstairs stackrooms in the center of the building for each of the special libraries; that is, law, medicine, and legislative reference.

A feature not in the original blueprints, but whose addition met with universal appreciation, was a fireproof safety vault. After the fire, the Trustees of Public Buildings contracted for a walk-in vault, with a ponderous steel door and combination lock, installed in a corner of the basement. The State Library has since kept its most sacrosanct possessions locked up in that subterranean crypt, to be brought forth for public viewing only on special occasions and under rigid safeguards. The dimensions of this vault are 43 feet long by 15 feet wide, and within it is a small subsidiary vault containing such items as the Emancipation Proclamation, the Washington relics, the Charles II Charter of the New York Province, and the André "spy papers."

The architectural hub of the new building was an impressive rotunda rising from the second floor 94 feet to the zenith of its dome. Pendant from the dome was a magnificent chandelier, encircled by draped female figures, whose sculptor was Charles Keck; this was coated with silver foil, and its reputed cost was $20,000. Keck apparently got his inspiration from a chandelier in the Cathedral of Pisa, Italy. After all its tribulations, the library was finally being treated with a liberal hand. The rotunda formed a superb vestibule, in effect, for the reading rooms of the library. Around its frieze were carved the words: "Here shall be gathered the best books of all lands and all ages."

From its axis, the rotunda branched into tall barrel-vaulted corridors, with skylights of patterned glass, suggesting the cruciform design of a cathedral. The "nave," was the approach to the general reading room which jutted far out from the rear of the building; the two arms of the "transept" led to the Law Library and the Periodical Library. Flanking these two component libraries along the front of the building were the Legislative Reference Library and the Medical Library. Surrounding the rotunda walls were 46 fluted columns in neo-Roman style. The spaces between the columns were to be gradually filled, during the ensuing 5 years, with mural panels done by Will H. Low, a popular artist of the period. These 32 murals are symbolic of a theme: "The Aspiration of Man for Intellectual Enlightenment and the Results of Its Attainment."

The architect, Henry Hornbostel, had completed his education in Paris where he doubtless spent time in the Bibliothèque Nationale. It is taken for granted that he found the idea in the interior design of that library for his treatment of the State Library's main reading room. Its multiple-arched ceiling vaults, supported by slender metal pillars which produce a scalloped effect, are an obvious adaptation from the Parisian institution.

There was to be no skimping for space this time. The general reading room measured 130 feet by 106 feet, and was 50 feet high to the center of the tiled vaults. It contained 136 reading desks. Tall mullioned windows on three sides provided sunlight. At the rear of the

room, alcoves were partitioned off for local history and genealogy, technology, and education. The fireproof stacks extending deep beneath this room, unseen by the public, provided space for 2,000,000 books. (This capacity was later substantially increased.)

The building's long third floor was assigned to the Library School, the Extension Division, and the Library for the Blind. The entire top floor was given over to the State Museum, which for the first time, was enabled to bring all its collections under one roof.

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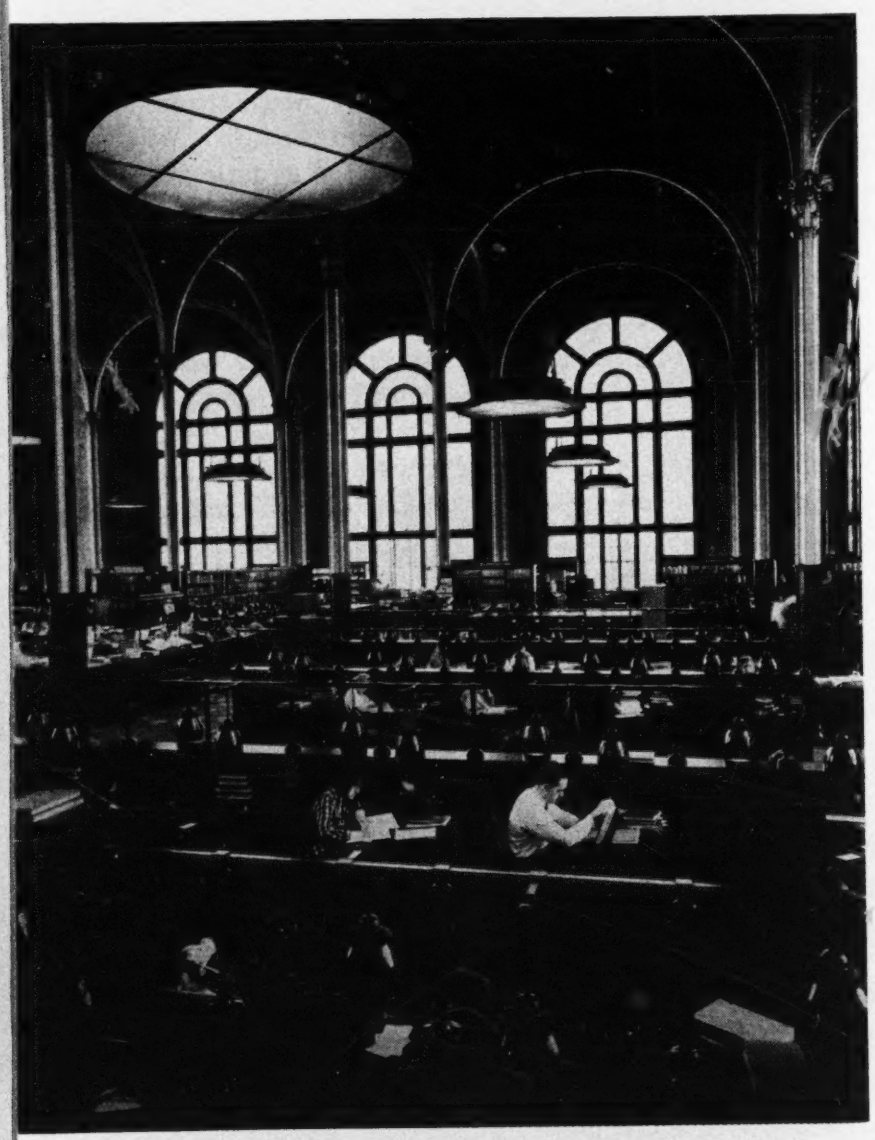
The rotunda, looking toward the main reading room entrance. The exhibit cases are below; the card catalogs along side walls between the columns.

Burns Photography, Inc.



The general reading room of the State Library, pictured in the 1960's. The multivaulted ceiling and slender pillars were an adaptation from the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris.

This, then, was the setting for the 3-day dedication ceremonies in October 1912, for which the leading educators of America, some from abroad, converged on Albany. The focus of the gathering was the rotunda, as yet barren of furnishings and murals but profusely bedecked with flowers and palms. The general reading room of the library was thrown open for the first time at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, October 15—but only for registration of visitors and for their plaudits. Another 6 months would pass before it would be available for public use.

During the formal ceremonies in Chancellors Hall, Chancellor Whitelaw Reid, who was also now Ambassador to the Court of St. James, acknowledged "the helpful sympathy from lovers of books and of libraries throughout our own country, and particularly the spontaneous and inspiring readiness of friends abroad to replace old gifts." He specifically cited replacement gifts which had come from the British government and the British Museum.

Commissioner Draper, delivering the dedicatory address from a wheelchair on the stage, stated:

> In a larger sense we rededicate today to the service of the people of the State and of the nation the remains of a noble action of the state library, which was gathered up in flame and smoke, and which by the noble action of the State is being hourly made broader and stronger than we had ever dared to hope. . . We will make it a power station more than a storehouse.

At the time of the move into the Education Building, the library had replenished its stock to about 250,000 books, of which 109,036 had been accessioned since the fire (the rest being from duplicates). These were transferred from storage in 12 different buildings around town, or came in from dealers and other libraries who had been withholding shipments until there was a place to put them. Because funds for rentals ran out at the end of the then fiscal year, September 30, 1912, all books in storage were poured into the Education Building before it was quite ready for them. None of the reading rooms as yet had shelves or furniture. The main stacks were not even near completion. The books were simply piled in basement rooms to wait. The stack contract was not officially finished until May 12, 1913, at which time the last workman left the building.

The reopening of the library was a piecemeal business. The first sections to admit the public were the Law Library and the Legislative Reference Library, on October 18, 1912. The Periodical Room followed on December 16. The Medical Library opened its doors on January 15, 1913. The general reading room was opened and the library was declared in full operation on April 14, 1913.

Never before had any library purchased books at such a rate, over a sustained period of time, as did the New York State Library during its recovery period. By the end of September 1913, its contents were up to 335,000 bound volumes. Auction buying accounted for a fair percentage of the acquisitions. Anyone in the least familiar with library mechanics will understand what the inflow meant in terms of classifying, cataloging, and shelving. Library officials discussed at length, and carefully considered, whether to retain the Dewey Decimal System—a major point in its favor being that most other libraries in the State were using it.

As reference librarian during the convalescence from the fire, Frank L. Tolman, perhaps more than any other

individual, influenced the wise selection and balance in the book purchases, with a broad spectrum of scholarship and detailed knowledge of what the collection had been before.

By 1930, the library passed the million-book milestone. That is to say, its resources then numbered 1,129,224 items, of which roughly 700,000 were bound books. At that juncture, James I. Wyer, still director of the library, felt justified in saying of his domain: "It is again, since its destruction in 1911, a noble library."

Dr. James I. Wyer established a 30-year record for tenure as State librarian.

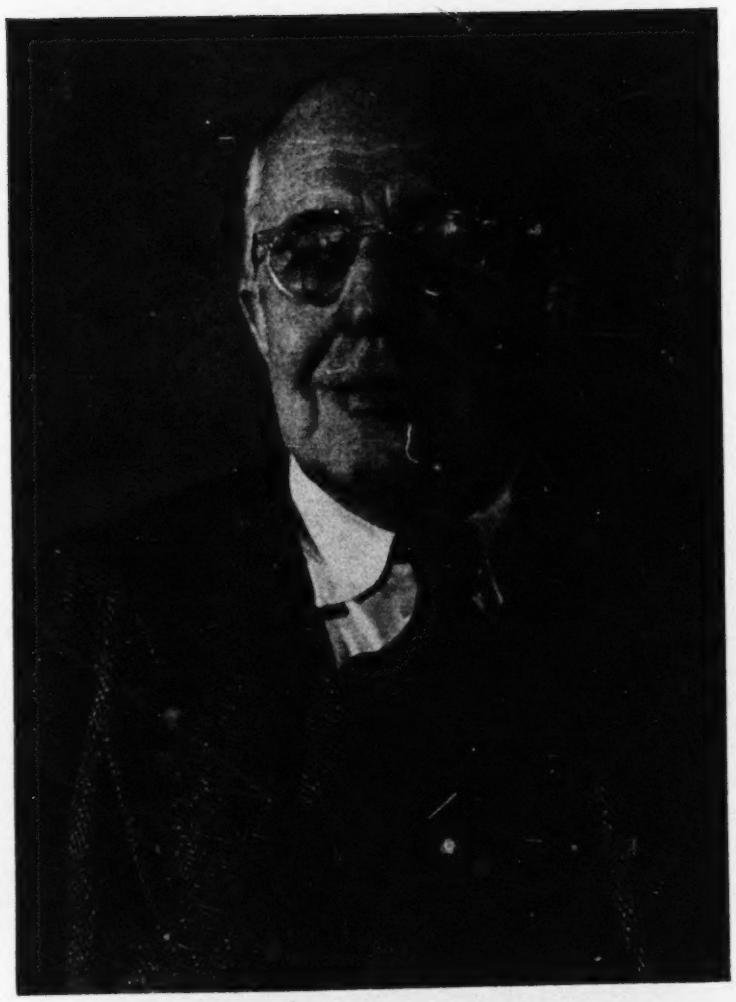
With the forcible eviction of the State Library from the Capitol, a question arose as to convenient library services for the Senate and Assembly. Nearby as the new location would be, messenger and telephone communication would hardly suffice. By an Act of 1915, the Legislature established a Legislative Library, combining the former small Senate and Assembly libraries and entirely separate from the State Library. In the restoration of the Capitol, quarters for the Legislative Library were developed in the same approximate space which had been occupied by the central reading room of the State Library, and preserving the same entrance. This was walled with white marble, and the artist, Will Low, did a set of historical murals for it during the same time he was painting the murals for the State Library rotunda.

One of the library's more grievous losses was that of its extraordinary newspaper files, many dating from colonial time. No other class of printed matter was so hard to come by after the fire as back files of New York State newspapers. Some Albany publishers were generous benefactors in this emergency. William Barnes, inheritor of Thurlow Weed's durable *Albany Evening Journal,* deposited with the library 1,500 bound volumes of New York City and Albany papers, including a complete file of the *Journal* from its founding in 1830. The Argus Company followed suit with an entire set of the *Albany Argus* from its founding in 1815. Martin H. Glynn, publisher of the *Albany Times-Union* and a former Governor of the State, donated a complete file of his paper and its ancestors dating from the first issue of the *Morning Times* in 1856.

During World War I, Dr. Wyer established a precedent by organizing the State Library for aid to the military effort. For the first time, a library was inventoried and oriented toward war-time uses for national defense. A special reference collection of military books and periodicals was maintained, and an interlibrary loan traffic was developed with training camp libraries. The movement was taken up nationally, and the American Library Association appointed Wyer as chairman of its committee on camp libraries. Dr. Tolman, reference librarian, took a leave of absence to serve as librarian for Camp Upton.

The library celebrated its 100th birthday in 1918 with a ceremony in Chancellors Hall at which State Librarian Wyer remarked: "In a sense, the New York State Library is but seven years old." The American Library Association was holding its annual convention at the same time in Saratoga Springs, and the delegates accepted an invitation from the Regents to spend the final day of their sessions in Albany and participate in the centennial program. Even Melvil Dewey came down from Lake Placid and gave an address entitled "A Sixth of a Century," reviewing his time as director.

Dr. Wyer liked to talk about the "New York idea" of a State Library, as being a unique concept which had evolved over the years in this State: of serving alike the big and the little library, the great university and the rural school. "The New York idea of the State Library," he said, "is of a great central reference and



As reference librarian, Dr. Frank L. Tolman took a leading role in rebuilding the collections after the fire. He later headed the Extension Division.

lending library adequate to the great University system of the State, serving each of the thousands of institutions in the University according to its needs, and through them serving all the citizens of all the cities and villages and towns of the State."

A Book Information Section was inaugurated in 1926 as a service to all libraries of the State. It began issuing a monthly publication, *The Bookmark,* with capsule comments on selective lists of recent books, along with library news notes. *Bookmark* replaced the listing of *Best Books* (of the year) which had been published for 22 years.

Exhibit cases were finally installed in the rotunda in the 1920's after long procrastination which irked the Regents into voting to "impress upon the state authorities in all proper ways the importance of this matter." The original plans had provided for "strong, artistic cases of glass and steel" to be located between the rotunda columns. A fund of $20,000 had been available for this purpose all along, but the Education Department was put off with "excuses" for not purchasing the cases. (Most of the present green-oak cases were from the New York World's Fair of 1939-40, where the library had an exhibit.) Ever since the cases were obtained, the library has regularly maintained interesting exhibits on topical themes. One such display which attracted widespread interest in the late '40s, originated by Dr. Charles F. Gosnell as librarian, was entitled "20,000 Years of Comics", making the point that the picture-strip idea has been around since the cave drawings. A number of noted cartoonists attended the opening, and the U. S. Treasury Department later sponsored a nationwide tour of the exhibit for a bond drive. With 1,200 items, it traced the evolution of the picture-story down through Egyptian art, cathedral windows of the Middle Ages, and Indian wampum, to the modern comic book.

As the depression of the 1930's deepened, libraries experienced a "boom" in reader use, and the State Library was called upon to take up the slack. Dr. Wyer reported that "not only are thousands turning to books as a relief from idleness, economic worry and distress, but also that enforced leisure is being used for self-improvement, looking toward a better future status." In 1935, 125,000 individuals used the State Library's reading room and more than 100,000 books were sent out of town. But the depression also had an untoward effect for the State Library. Because of drastically reduced appropriations, new-book acquisitions slowed down to a crawl, while binding and ordinary maintenance came to an almost complete standstill. After that and World War II, the library was several years in catching up.

Meanwhile, the store of historical manuscript treasures—while the fire losses could never be replaced—was gradually being rebuilt. The first major accession of this sort after the fire was another batch of Van Rensselaer Manor papers. These were purchased by the State in 1912, for $12,000, and deposited with the Secretary of State; the following year they were transferred to the State Library. They included maps of the East and West Manors; field notes and surveys; leases, deeds, mortgages, and so on. In fact, they established a chain of title for a great deal of the land comprising present-day Albany and Schenectady Counties.

As time went on, more rare material kept trickling in, such as letters of DeWitt Clinton, Philip Schuyler, and members of the Van Rensselaer family. Records of the religious sect of Shakers were obtained. The library's invaluable set of the *Jesuit Relations* had been destroyed in the fire, and, from numerous sources, these

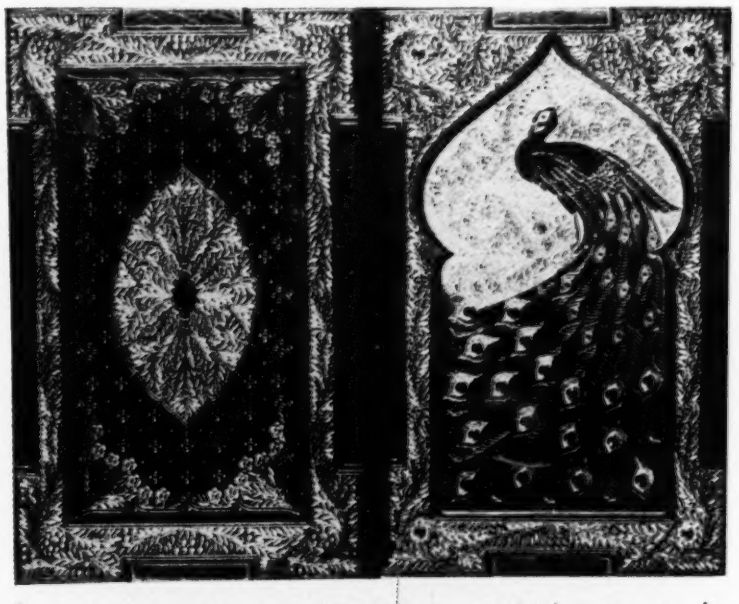
hard-to-find and expensive documents of early Americana have been reassembled until the library again owns an almost complete set. During the 1930's, the papers of Thomas Cole, exponent of the Hudson River School of artists, were acquired by purchase.

Almost as if it were intended to compensate for the pinch of the depression, the library received in the mid-'30s the largest personal bequest of its entire history: the Gotshall Collection, plus a $35,000 fund with which to augment it. This windfall came as a complete surprise when the will of William C. Gotshall was probated in New York City.

Gotshall was an engineer who began his rise with the Missouri Electric Light & Power Company, of St. Louis, and reaped a fortune through the development and promotion of electric railways, in the United States and abroad. He converted New York City's Second Avenue Railway from horse-cars to electricity, and had been owner and president of the New York & Port Chester Railroad. The range of his interests was astonishing: exploration, archeology, big-game hunting, fencing, art collecting, book collecting, and binding. In the collection of books, particularly, he exercised the keenest of taste and judgment of literary and historical values. His private library contained 1,355 books, of which a great many were first editions and perhaps 300 of exceptional rarity. Many of these he had bound in exquisite, gold-tooled leather by distinguished bookbinders of that era.

Gotshall died in New York on August 21, 1935, at the age of 65. His will disclosed that he had singled out the New York State Library to be the beneficiary of his collection, both books and art. It specified that all rarities, first editions, and those in special bindings be "kept forever in a separate collection, shelved in specially designed bookcases, in a special room or alcove" whose location was to be marked by a bronze plate. He further willed that a special bookplate be designed, bearing his name, and that it be inserted into each volume. The cash bequest of $35,000 was to cover the cost of bookcases and an annotated catalog of the collection, and to provide for additional book purchases at the discretion of the library.

The book collection included first editions of all the works of Charles Dickens; three first editions of Keats poems; 80 leaves from the manuscript of Scott's *Lady of the Lake;* original editions of DeQuincey's *Confessions of an English Opium Eater,* Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas,* the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam,* and *Alice in Wonderland*. Beautiful bronze bookcases were designed by Carl W. Larson, of the State Division of Architecture. Seven of these have since displayed the luxurious bindings of the Gotshall books in two opposite alcoves of the rotunda.



A gem of the bookbinders' art which came to the State Library with the Gotshall Collection. It is a first edition of FitzGerald's version of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, marvellously bound by the English firm of Sangorski & Sutcliffe. The cover is of rose crushed levant with inlaid panels of green levant, elaborately gold tooled.

Among significant purchases which were later made with the Gotshall fund, under the regime of Dr. Gosnell, is *Scenographia Americana,* the extremely rare collection of early American views, possibly the only complete one still in existence. The library lost its previous copy of this work in the fire, and the replacement was finally located in 1948 at a price of $2,000.

Another, and especially tantalizing, acquisition made possible by the Gotshall bequest is *Our Travels,* an anonymous manuscript account of a journey across New York State, and return, in the year 1822. The unidentified party of three made the trip primarily to escape a yellow fever epidemic raging in New York City. The small volume, in superb handwriting, contains 10 sensitive watercolors of scenes en route. *Our Travels* was published by the State Library as one of the activities in observance of its Sesquicentennial Year.

Dr. James Wyer established the all-time record for tenure as New York's State librarian—30 years. Retiring in 1938, he went to Salt Lake City to live and enjoy his leisure with his hobby of stamp collecting, in which he held a national reputation. The manpower shortage in World War II drew him temporarily out of retirement to work again at his early calling as cashier of a bank. Pending his replacement, Joseph Gavit, associate librarian, filled in as acting State librarian.

19. Into the Electronic Era

With America's plunge into World War II, the State Library girded itself to face a potential new kind of danger: aerial bombardment. As events developed, of course, this was an exaggerated fear, but the whole country was jittery for a while about destruction from the skies. The vault in the basement was inspected by an engineer from the State War Council and pronounced bomb-proof.

Remembering only too well its dreadful fire losses of three decades earlier, the library thereupon transferred many more of its rare books and manuscripts into the vault, in addition to its regular contents. The reading rooms blossomed with air raid instruction placards. Staff members served as air raid wardens, and air raid drills were practiced. A curfew of 6 p.m. was observed. The State librarian was made chairman of a State Committee for the Conservation of Cultural Resources, which sought out safe depositories for library and museum treasures away from industrial areas.

The term of Robert W. G. Vail as director of the library coincided approximately with the war period. His appointment became effective January 16, 1940. Vail came from Worcester, Massachusetts, where he had been librarian of the American Antiquarian Society since 1930.

Burns Photography, Inc.

Looking along a corridor of a stack level below the general reading room.

Burns Photography, Inc.

The fireproof vault where the library's most valuable treasures are stored. Facing the camera is Mason Tolman, director of the library. With him is Donald C. Anthony, former head of the Manuscripts Section, now assistant librarian of the Columbia University Libraries. In the foreground are a few of the vault's contents, including the parchment scroll of the Charles II Charter, Washington's dress sword, and one of a pair of pistols given him by the Marquis de Lafayette.

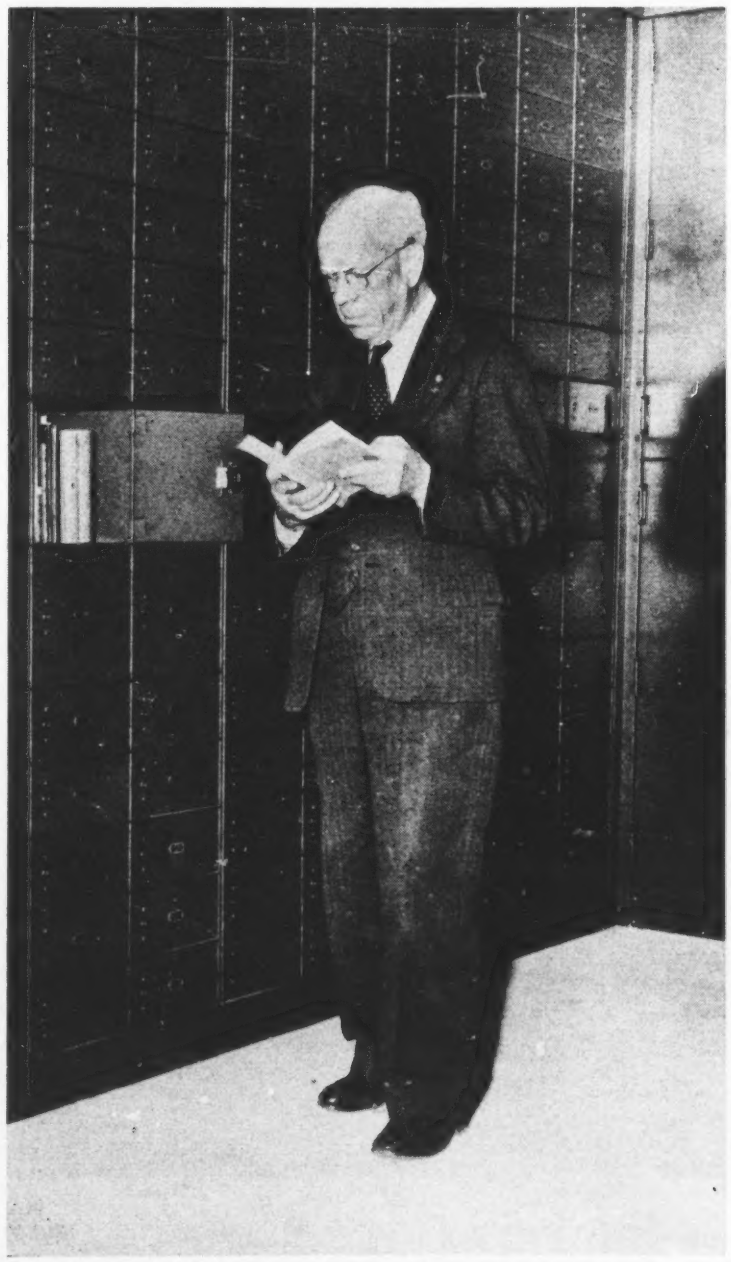
Robert W. G. Vail was State librarian during the World War II years.

At heart an antiquarian, Vail took special delight in the historical gems he found at Albany. Such was his interest that he took to composing a series of illuminating accounts of selected items ("a few of the rubies and diamonds," as he called them). He incorporated these essays into his annual reports.

Soon he was able to announce some important additions to the list. The Gotshall Collection was augmented by the purchase, from the fund accompanying that bequest, of a virtually complete set of New York's colonial session laws for the period 1736-1743. These had originally belonged to Adolph Philipse, a son of the first lord of the Philipse Manor on the lower Hudson. About the same time came a gift of the papers of the Burden Iron Company, of Troy, N.Y., from the last officials of that firm which had faded out in the 1930's. These papers were of significance in the industrial history of America, giving insight into a leading company which had supplied iron and steel products to the emerging railroads and to the government during the Civil War.

After less than 5 years as State librarian, Vail submitted his resignation in 1944 to accept the post as director of the New York Historical Society. Once again, Gavit stepped in as acting librarian pending the choice of a successor.

Among the memorable figures in the annals of the State Library, Joseph Gavit occupies a high niche. At his retirement in 1946, he had rounded out a half-century in its employ. An innate love of books motivated him to seek a library job, and he started on the payroll of the State Library in 1896 at a wage of $20 a month. As chief of the shelf section, he took a significant part in the salvage operations after the 1911 fire and in moving materials into the Education Building. During his long and devoted career, it was said of him that he had handled, and was personally familiar with, almost every book in the library. Certain it was that he had an immense and highly retentive memory of the library's contents, and this memory was always at the disposal of any inquirer. When he retired, he was awarded a special citation by Chancellor William J. Wallin of the Board of Regents.



Joseph Gavit was virtually a walking catalog of the State Library.

Each of the library's successive new homes was confidently expected to take care of its further expansion for a long time to come. In each instance, the pace of its growth had been more rapid than anyone foresaw, so that it wound up straining at the seams. So vast had been the growth of the collections in a mere three decades that, by the end of World War II, the library was again having its old feeling of claustrophobia. In his 1945 report as acting librarian, Gavit remarked: "The only proper illustrations to accompany this report would be photographs showing overcrowded shelving conditions in reading rooms and stacks. . . The main seven-story stack is practically full in all its seven levels. . . It is hoped that the postwar plans will actually include an addition for library purposes including stack capacity for not less than half a million volumes."

At that date, the library's inventory numbered beyond 2,500,000 items and of these 786,765 were bound.

* * * *

The next State librarian had been selected by the end of 1945. He was Dr. Charles F. Gosnell, at that time librarian of Queens College and a faculty associate of the Columbia University School of Library Service. An alumnus of the University of Rochester, Gosnell held a master's degree from Columbia and a doctorate from New York University. During his term at Albany in 1949, the official title of the position was changed to State Librarian and Assistant Commissioner of Education for Libraries.

Finding the library again in that straitjacket of insufficient space, Dr. Gosnell made one of his main concerns an attack on the overcrowding. This eventuated in a modernization program during the mid-1950's affecting particularly the Law Library and the Medical Library. Each of these subject libraries had a very spacious, elongated reading room which was actually beyond its routine needs for that purpose. In the remodeling, these reading rooms were cut in half, while care was taken to preserve the architectural harmony; the rear portion of each then being filled with three levels of shelving. Thus the stack capacity for both was doubled. During this program the capacity of the main stacks was also increased by installing compact shelving. Needless to say, such expansions were temporary palliatives, considering the astronomical increase in printed matter pouring from the presses of the world.

As State librarian, Dr. Gosnell was a believer in what he called the "attention-getters"—that is, promotional episodes which would gain publicity, and thereby wider

A quartet of State librarians. The portrait of Alfred B. Street (artist unknown) hangs in the office of John A. Humphry, Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, (left). On the other side of the painting are Mr. Humphry's two immediate predecessors in the office, Dr. Charles F. Gosnell and S. Gilbert Prentiss (right).

understanding and support of the library. His most resounding success of that sort was the library's involvement with the New York State Freedom Train in 1949. The idea for this sprang from the National Freedom Train, which had toured the Nation soon after the war, exhibiting the great historic documents of the United States, such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. That train had paused in Albany for only one day, so that many people were unable to pass through it. In partial compensation for that disappointment, Gosnell conceived a rotunda exhibit relating to the ideals of human liberty.

At his suggestion, Miss Edna L. Jacobsen, in charge of the Manuscripts and History Section, assembled 84 documents, including the handwritten drafts of the Emancipation Proclamation and Washington's Farewell Address, Franklin's early plan of Union, the Flushing Remonstrance, and papers pertaining to the rise of feminism and to New York State's abolition of slavery. The case exhibit drew so much favorable notice that an Albany newspaper editor proposed a State Freedom Train to carry the documents into all parts of the State. The Legislature appropriated $50,000, the State Publishers Association and the State Society of Newspapers Editors supported the plan, and the Associated Railroads of New York raised $650,000 to cover the cost of remodeling six coaches and of operating the train.

Three cars were rebuilt with steel plating and security devices for the safety of the documents. All six were painted in the State colors, blue and gold. The Freedom Train toured the State all during 1949 and into 1950, making stops in 159 communities and being visited by 976,716 people.

The State Library had pioneered extension activity with Melvil Dewey's traveling libraries and "home education." Frank L. Tolman had evolved the concept a good deal further as head of the Division of Library Extension and Adult Education of the State Education Department, during a period in which that division functioned separately from the State Library. Ultimately, the extension activity was reunited with the library, and its flowering into the regionalization of library services was by far the outstanding achievement of Dr. Gosnell's administration. At last Dewey's dream of making library opportunities available to every crossroad and lone farmhouse in the State came true, almost literally.

The first time the State Library established a branch operation was in 1948 when the so-called Watertown Demonstration Project was inaugurated. As a step toward the hoped-for development of regional library systems, the Education Department had recommended a pilot project to be set up in a selected remote region where population was sparse and libraries few. The Legislature started the project with an appropriation of $100,000, and the area picked for the demonstration consisted of Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties, near the Canadian border. The Watertown Regional Library Service Center served more than 60 local libraries, with central cataloging, supplemental loans of books, and consultant and advisory assistance. The project was a trail-blazing experiment not only for New York State, but also for the Nation at large. Its duration was intended to be 3 years, but it was so successful that it was extended to 12.

The Watertown Project and recommendations of Governor Dewey's Library Committee (1949-50) led to the acceptance by the Legislature of the principle of large-scale State aid for public library systems. Beginning with a library-aid law in 1950, and growing appropriations, a network of 22 public library systems was developed, serving about 99 per cent of the State's population. The State Library Division of Library Extension provided the leadership for the program, and the library served as the central resource for books not obtainable on a regional basis. The traveling libraries were phased out during the late 1940's, giving way to regional bookmobiles. During the build-up of the systems, the Library Extension unit of the State Library grew into the Division of Library Development. The New York pattern of library systems attracted national attention and imitation.

In the meantime, the State Library embarked on new adventures in a field that continues to challenge the entire library world—electronics and automation. Teletype communications (TWX) were installed starting with a dozen connections to regional library centers, and later expanded to link up with principal libraries of the State. From this preliminary step, the library took a long stride with an experiment in Facsimile Transmission (FACTS). The object of this was the instantaneous transfer of entire pages of reading matter from one library to another, over the leased wires. The first hook-up of this nature was made in January, 1967, between the State Library and the New York Public Library. From this the Facsimile Transmission Project was enlarged to connect 14 major research libraries of the State. While much was learned from the experiment, it was ended on March 31, 1968, to await further technological developments in the equipment.

These innovations were part of a larger program of reference and research library service initiated in 1966. The program is the capstone of the public library systems development. Aimed at the advanced researcher, it has both State-level and regional-level aspects.

In its Sesquicentennial Year, the library was continuing to explore the potentialities of computer devices in library technique, with three data-processing experiments in progress.

Dr. Gosnell remained at Albany until 1962, when he took up new duties as director of libraries for New York University. His successor was found already on the library staff. S. Gilbert Prentiss was promoted to State librarian from his previous position as director of Library Extension.

Under the Prentiss regime, a new acquisitions policy was formulated, the Regents Library Council was reactivated, the Governor's Library Conference was held (at the call of Governor Nelson Rockefeller) to chart new pathways for libraries, and a staff reorgnization was initiated. The term of Mr. Prentiss was brief. He resigned in 1965 to work as a private consultant.

On the replacement of Prentiss, an administrative reorganization was affected. John A. Humphry was appointed Assistant Commissioner for Libraries, effective April 1, 1967. Mr. Humphry, a graduate of Harvard and of the Columbia School of Library Service, came to Albany from the directorship of the Brooklyn Public Library.

At the same time a new position was created—that of director of the State Library. While the term, "director of the library," had often been loosely used in the

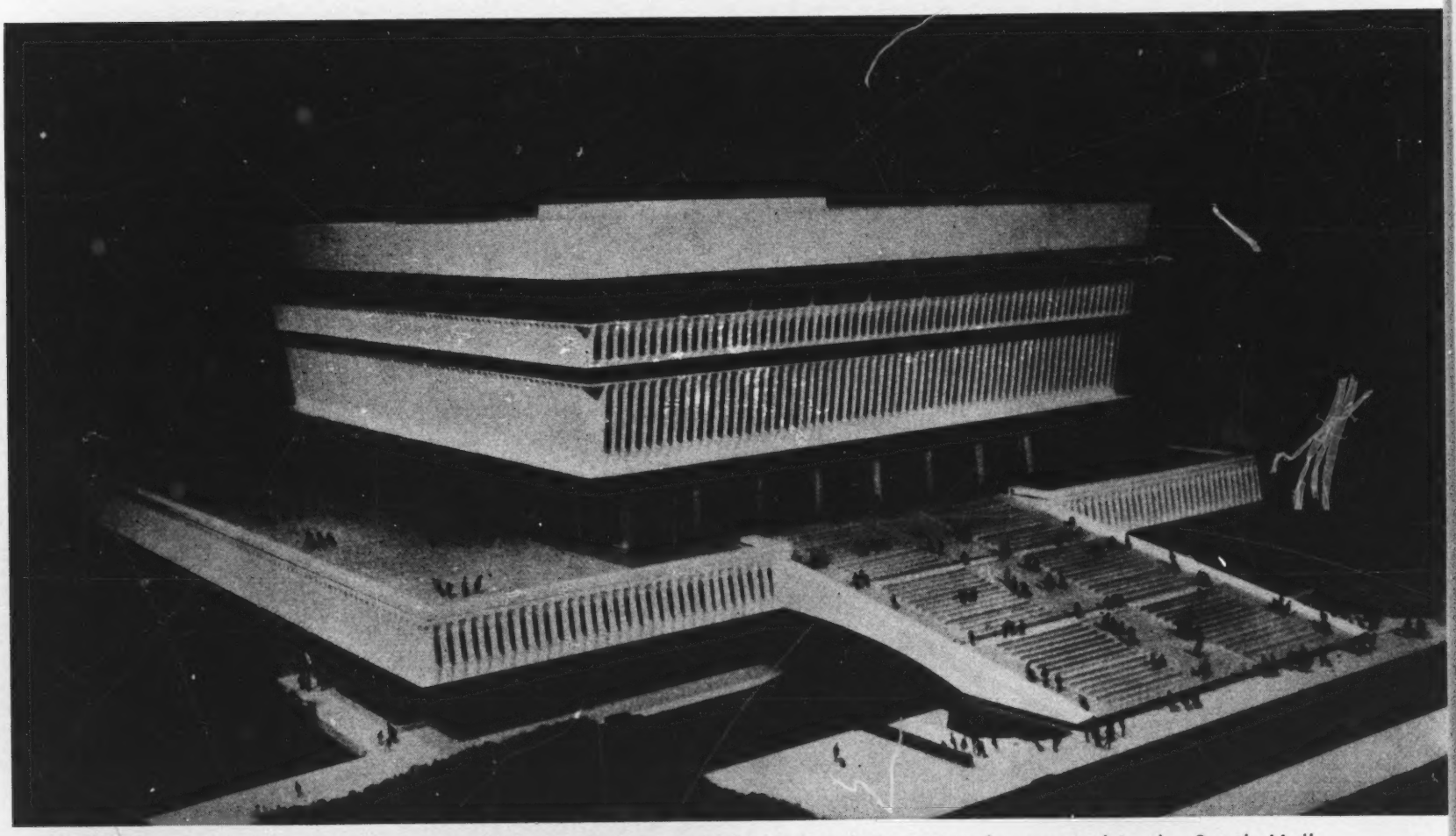
century past, the official title had remained State Librarian. The new post was now filled by Mason Tolman, who had been Principal Librarian for Readers' Services. Mr. Tolman represented the second generation of a family tradition in the service of the State Library, as the son of Frank L. Tolman. At the same time, the Division of Library Extension was redesignated as the Division of Library Development, and Jean L. Connor was continued as its director.

Great expectations were once more looming for the library as Humphry took office at its helm. An important part of his function was to be in preparing the library for a move into still another and better home—the sixth abode in its history.

The South Mall, a prodigious new complex of government buildings — heralded as the future heart of New York State government—was under construction. Lined up in parallel array southward from the existing State Capitol, these structures of advanced architectural design would surround a row of reflecting pools suggesting those in the Mall at Washington. At the southern end of the complex, facing the Capitol, was to be a splendid building, the Cultural Center, scheduled for completion in 1972.

This Center would be the next haven for the State Library. Sharing the building with it would be the State Museum and the Office of State History.

Again in its long, proud, and often troubled history arose the prospect for the State Library to escape from a condition of overcrowding and to begin a bright, fresh chapter.



Future home of the State Library: architect's rendering of the Cultural Center to be erected in the South Mall.

20. A Note on Sources

The basic source of information on the New York State Library is to be found in its *Annual Reports* (1819-1945). For the period following 1844, the *Annual Reports* of the Regents of The University of the State of New York, and the *Journals* of its meetings have been consulted. Much valuable information is scattered throughout the *Journals* and *Documents* of the New York State Assembly and Senate, to which Adelaide Hasse's *Index of Economic Material in Documents of the States. . . New York* provides an effective guide. Early files of the *Library Journal* were used, as were a number of New York City and Albany newspapers, especially the *New York Times,* the *New York Tribune,* the *Albany Argus,* and the *Albany Evening Journal.* The papers of George Clinton, Sir William Johnson, and Alfred B. Street in the Manuscripts and History Section of the New York State Library, and the Melvil Dewey and DeWitt Clinton papers at Columbia University were valuable reference sources. The following particular works also were consulted:

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Index

A

Abbott, Samuel J., 85, 86, 87
  death in Capitol fire, 88
Acquisitions and gifts
  after fire, 103-104
  Bleecker, Harmanus, collection, 36
  books from variety of European sources reported in 1847, 22
  Burden Iron Company of Troy, N.Y., 108
  Clinton, George, Papers, 36-37
  Codex Theodosianus, 15
  Colonial Session Laws from 1736-1743, 108
  1841 report, 15
  foreign donations initiated by Vattemare, 23
  French minister of war, document of, *illus.,* 21
  Gotshall, William C., bequest from, 106; *illus.,* 108
  historical manuscript treasures after fire, 105
  history, early emphasis on, 25
  Homes, Henry, 44
  industrial history, papers of, 108
  iron chain, links of, 39; *illus.*
  Johnson, Sir William, Papers of, 36
  Lincoln, Abraham, Speeches of, 44
  medical library, 63
  million-book milestone, 104
  new policy formulated, 110
  newspapers after fire, 104
  orrery, 6
  Our Travels, 106
  Pope Gregory XVI, 31
  Scenographia Americana, 106
  slowed during depression, 105
  Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, 37
  Warden, David Bailie, Collection, 35
  Washington, George, collection of personal belongings, 41
Adirondacks
  Alfred Street's explorations of, 27
  Lake Placid Club, 75-78
Administrative reorganization, 110
Albany *Argus,* 1, 12
  brief account of State Library launching, 5
  gift of, after Library fire, 104
  interest in Melvil Dewey's problems, 79
  mineral water advertisement in, *illus.,* 3
  State Librarian's qualifications, 13
  Albany Army Relief Bazaar, Emancipation Proclamation draft sent to, 41
Albany Evening Journal, 11
  gift of, after fire, 104
Albany Medical College, donation of medical library to, 63
Albany Regency, 9, 11
Albany Times-Union, gift of, after fire, 104
Alliboal, Samuel, 26
American history, emphasis on books of, 25, 32
American Library Association
  founded, 59
  journal advertises cycling, *illus.,* 62
Ames, Ezra
  portrait of James Kent, *illus.,* 4
  portraits of John Tayler and De Witt Clinton, *illus.,* 3
Amherst, General Sir Jeffrey, letters
  lost in fire, 91
Anderson, Edwin H., *por.,* 79
  appointed Director of State Library, 80
  resignation, 84
André, Major, spy papers, 37; *illus.,* 38
  rescued from fire, 87
Anti-Masonic Party, 11
Anti-Rent Wars, 15, 28
Anti-Semitism, charges against Melvil Dewey, 77-78
Apprentices' Library in Albany, 7
Appropriations
  additional, in 1825 and 1827, 9
  Clinton, George, papers, 36
  Education Building, site and construction, 83
  finishing library in Capitol, 51
  fireproofing alcoves in State Street building, 32
  in 1840, 13, 25
  rehabilitation of collections after fire, 96
  relics of George Washington, 42
  restoration after fire, 96-97
  Vattemare, M., expenses of, 22
  Warden Collection, 35
  Watertown Demonstration Project, 110
Architects
  Eidlitz, Leopold, 45, 48, 49, 50
  Palmer & Hornbostel, 83, 101
  Perry, Isaac, 49-50, 53, 55
Archives, Manuscript Section, 63
  See also Historic documents
Archivists
  George Rogers Howell, 51, 93
  A. J. F. Van Laer, 93
Argus Company, gift of newspapers after fire, 104
Armstrong, General John, 35
Arnold, Benedict, spy papers, 37; *illus.,* 38
  rescued from fire, 87
Arrangement of books
  alphabetical, 14, 26
  Dewey decimal system, 59
Art treasures
  Birds of America, 16, 35
  losses in fire, 91
Assembly, Legislative Library
  established for, 104

Assembly Chamber
fissures in ceiling, 50
in new Capitol, 49
Assembly Journal
library bill recorded by, 4
petition of John Cook for compensation, 5
Assembly library fire, 85
Assistant Commissioner for
Libraries, John A. Humphry appointed as, 110
Assistant librarian
Augustus Homes appointed as, 33
salary, 1847, 27
Assistant to librarian authorized,
17
Atlas, Newspapers, 15, 17
Attorneys, borrowing privileges, 18
Audubon, John James, *Birds of America,* 16,35
folios salvaged from fire, 95-96; *illus.*

B

Bancroft, George, 35
Bank & Exchange Coffee House, 2
Barnard, Dr. Frederick A. P., 59
efforts for library career for women, 67
Barnburners, 15
Barnes, Mrs. Emily W., 41
Barnes, William, gift of newspapers, 104
Beck, Dr. T. Romeyn, 18, 28
Bellows, Henry W., draft of
Emancipation Proclamation purchased from, 40
Bequest, Gotshall Collection, 106
Berwick, William, manuscript
restoration, 95
Best Books, 72, 105
Bible, first book cataloged after
fire, 97
Biblioteca Americana, 35
Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, 101;
illus., 103
Biblioteca Nazionale at Turin, Italy,
fire, 81
Bicycling, promotion by Melvil Dewey,
61, 62
Birds of America, 16, 35
salvaged from fire, 95-96; *illus.*
Biscoe, Walter Stanley, 59, 60, 68
Blair, Elwood, 90
Bleecker, Harmanus, 28
collection given library, 36
Blind, Library for, 102
Blind readers, books for, 63
Bonnie (Boni) Blink Clubhouse, 75; *illus,* 74
Book burnings
Library of Congress, 2
York, Capital of Upper Canada, 11
See also Fire
Book exchange plan
initiated, 19-24
international, first, 12
lists destroyed in fire, 88
with new states, 1850's, 26
with southern states after Civil War, 44
Book Information Section, 105
Book repair, *Birds of America,* 16
Book stacks, in Capitol, 53
in Education Building, 83, 101, 102, 109; *illus.,* 107
Book wagons, 72, 110
Bookbinding, 7
gem of, *illus.,* 106
Bookcases, security measures, 18, 25
Gotshall Collection, 106
Bookmark, The, 72, 105
Bookmobiles, 110
Bookplates, signed by early librarians,
illus., 8, 10
Borrowing privileges
earliest, 18
legislators, 9
no books to be taken from Library, 5
See also Use of Library
Bouck, Governor William C., 15
Bowier family, manuscripts lent by, 93
Bradstreet, Colonel John, letters lost
in fire, 91
Branch operation, first, 110
Bridgeford, Chief William W., at
Capitol fire, 86
Brodhead, John Romeyn, assigned collecting of
documentary material, 28
Brown, John, 41
Brown, Robert, 12
State Librarian, 13-14
Buildings
Capitol, new, in Golden Corridor, 49-51
move upstairs, 53-57; *illus.*
Education Building, 101-103; *illus.*
first, 5
South Mall, 111; *illus.*
State Street, 31-33
entrance, *illus.,* 32
demolished, 49-50
temporary emergency quarters after fire, 95
Burden Iron Company of Troy, gift,
108
Butler, Nicholas Murray, 70
letter from Melvil Dewey to, 79

C

Candles, expenditures for, 12, 14
Canfield, James H., 70
Capitol, State, *see* State Capitol
Carnegie, Andrew, disinterest in
support of library schools, 67

Carnegie Corporation
assistance in transfer of library school to Columbia University, 70
Melvil Dewey Professorship of Library Service endowed by, 80
Cassidy, William, State Librarian, 15-17
Catalog, 1819, statistics and publication, 6
1847, 26
1850's, 26, 44
destroyed in fire, 88
Catalog cards, printed and standardized, 64
Cathedral design of rotunda, 101
Cause of fire at Capitol, 90
Central Agency for International Exchange, 20
Central reading room, *see* Reading rooms
Centralized library systems, 110
Dewey a prophet of, 72
Chancellors Hall, dedication ceremonies in, 103
Charles II, Charter of, 28; *illus.*, 107
rescued from fire, 87
Children's Library, 64
Circulation, traveling libraries, 73
Civil War, 44
Classification of books, Dewey Decimal System, 59, 60
Claus, Daniel, 36
Cleveland, Governor Grover, 49, 50
Clinton, Charles, diary, 37
Clinton, Governor DeWitt, 1
death, 10
education a fetish of, 4
legislative message introducing State Library idea, 2-5
letters, 105
library trustee, 5
personal choice of State Library books, 5
portrait, 3
signs first report of Library, 6
Clinton, Governor George, 1
papers of, 36-37
lost in fire, 91
Clinton, George W., editing of George Clinton papers, 37
Clinton, Maria, 6
Codex Theodosianus, 15
Coin collection, lost in fire, 91
Colden, Cadwallader, 4
Cole, Thomas, papers of, 106
Collections
emphasis on history, 25
Gotshall Collection, 106; *illus.*
Warden Collection, 35
Washington, personal relics, 41
Colonial Dutch documents
translation, 93
salvage from fire, 94
Colonial history, agent appointed to collect documents of, 26
Colonial Session Laws, 1736-1743
Columbia University
Library School returned to, 70
Melvil Dewey Professorship of Library Service at, 80
School of Library Economy at, 59
Comics, exhibit of, 105
Communications, Dewey a prophet of, 72
Connor, Jean L., 111
Cook, John
death, 9
first State Librarian, 5
librarian of Apprentices' Library, 7
reading rooms and mineral water, 2; *illus.,* 3
Cook, John E., 41
Cooper, General John Tayler, gift, 36
Cornell, Governor Alonzo B., 49
Cost, *see* Expenditures
Croswell, Edwin, 13
Cultural Center in South Mall, 111; *illus.*
Curtis, Chancellor George W., 63

D

Dawe, Grosvenor, 63
Day, Chancellor James R., letter from Melvil Dewey to, 79
Decimal classification system, 59
page from first book, *illus.,* 60
Dedication ceremonies, Education Building, 103
De Lancey, James, 94
Democratic Party, schism, 15
Dewey, Melvil, *por.*, 59
advice sought on reorganization of Library, 54
American Library Association founded by, 59
anti-Semitism charges against, 77-78
appointed consulting librarian, 51
appreciation of Library rooms in Capitol, 53
biographical background, 58-59
censure by Regents, 78
Director of State Library and Secretary of Regents, 58
fire, 1900 report on menace of, 81
reaction to, 90
growth of State Library under, 63
home, *illus.,* 61
innovations in library service, 64-65
investigation and exoneration of, by Legislative committee, 61
Lake Placid Club interests, 75-78
library extension activities, 71-73
library school started by, 59 efforts for, 67-70
Melville Dewey Professorship of Library Service established at Columbia University, 80

one hundredth anniversary of library, 104
political difficulties, 79
resignation from State Library, 80
simplified spelling, 58
Dewey, Governor Thomas E., 73
Dewey Decimal System, 59
page from first bok, *illus.*, 60
Director of Libraries and Home Education, 72
Director of State Library, new position created, 110
Dix, Governor John, 88
fused coins, 91
interest in salvage work after Capitol fire, 93-95
wire inspection after fire, 90
Documents, *see* Historic documents
Documents Relative to the Colonial History of the State of New York, 29
Donations, *see* Acquisitions and Gifts
Draper, Dr. Andrew Sloan, 63
dedicatory address, 103
"father" of State Education Building, 82
foresight in protection of historic documents, 81
remarks after fire, 91
sculpture, *illus.*, 83
variance with Melvil Dewey, 76-79
Drisler, Dr. Henry, 68
Duplicate Department, 24
Duplicate materials
storage, 1867, 45
volumes foundation of library after fire, 96
Dutch documents
agent appointed to collect, 28
salvage after fire, 94
translation, 93

E

Eastman, William R., 72
Eaton, James W., 50
Education Building
dedication ceremony, 97
delays in completion, 84, 97 losses in fire blamed on, 91
design competition, 83
legislative action, 83
library quarters dominant element in, 101
need for, resolution of Regents, 82
site, 83
Education Library, beginning of, 63
Educational Extension, Division of, 72
Eidlitz, Leopold, 45, 48, 49, 50
Emancipation Proclamation
draft of, purchase, 40; *illus.*
encapsulation ceremony, *illus.*, 41
original draft a lottery prize, 27
rescued from fire, 87
Enclosed shelves recommended, 18, 25
Epyornis egg, 23
Erie Canal
completion, 9
excavation started, 1
Evening Journal, 15
interest in choice of State Librarian, 17
word duel concerning, 13
Exchange, international, first record of, 12
initiated, 19-24
lists dstroyed in fire, 88
operative with new states, 1850's, 26 with Southern states after Civil War, 44
Exhibits
comic books, 105
New York State Freedom Train, 109
rotunda of Education Building, 105
Expenditures
Emancipation Proclamation, 40
in first report, 6
new building on State Street, 31-32
orrery, 6
Washington relics, 42
See also Appropriations
Extension Division, 102
Extension services, 71-73, 110

F

Facsimile Transmission Project (FACTS), 110
Fenton, Governor Reuben E., 44
Fire
Biblioteca Nazionale at Turin, Italy, 81
Library of Congress, 32
menace in State Library reported in 1849, 31
in 1900, 81
Fire at State Capitol and State Library, 85-91; *illus.*
cause, 90
restoration, appropriation voted for, 96
salvage activities, 93-96
Fireproof safety vault, 101; *illus.*, 107
First editions, Gotshall Collection, 106
Fish, Hamilton, 31
Flower, Governor Roswell P., veto of bill for extension services, 71
Foreign governments, gifts from, 23
Fountain pens, Dewey crusader for, 65
Frederick the Great, Works of, 23
Freedom Train, State, 109
French, James M., 15
Fuller, Thomas, 45
Fulton, Robert, biography, 4, 6
Funk, Dr. Isaak K., 79

G

Gavit, Joseph, *por.*, 108
acting State Librarian, 106, 108
salvage activities after fire, 95-96

General Library
Melvil Dewey Director of, 63
Miscellaneous Library becomes, 44
move into new Capitol, 50
reading room, State Street building, *illus.*, 33
General reading room, *see* Reading rooms
Geological Reports, initial, 16
Gifts, *see* Acquisitions and gifts
Gifts and Exchange Section established, 22, 24
Glynn, Martin H., gift after fire, 104
Godfrey, Annie, 59
Goewey, Dwight, 85
Golden Corridor in Capitol, 49; *illus.*, 48
Gorham, H. S., 85
Gosnell, Dr. Charles F., State Librarian, 109-110
State Freedom Train, 109
"20,000 Years of Comics" exhibit, 105
Gotshall, William C., bequest from, 106; *illus.*
purchases from bequest, 108
Governor's Library Conference, 110
Grant, Dr. Asahel, 44
Graves, Dr. Frank P., 70
Griswold, Stephen B., 44
"father of Law Library," 63

H

Harold I. Fisher Memorial Award to Dr. Frank L. Tolman, 73
Harrison, William Henry, 15
Havell, Robert, Jr., 16
Heliogeastrum, 7
Hickcox, John H., 43
Higgins, Governor Frank W., 83
Higher education, State Library part of, 63
Hill, Governor David B., 37, 50, 54
Historian, State, 94
Historic documents
agent appointed to collect, 27
burned in Capitol fire, 85-86
concern for safe-keeping in Capitol, 84
rescue from fire, 87
treasures rebuilt after fire, 105
windfall by Legislative action of 1847, 27
History, emphasis in collections, 25
History of New Netherland, 28
Hoag, Mrs. Mary, 8
Holley, Orville L., 37
Home Education Division, 72
appointment of Melvil Dewey as Director, 76
Homes, Dr. Henry Augustus, assistant librarian, 33
death, and tribute of Regents, 51
State Librarian, 43-47
Hooker, Philip, 5
Hornbostel, Henry, architect, 83, 101
Horner, Dr. Harlan Hoyt, at scene of fire, 87
warning of fire hazards at Capitol, 84
Hosack, David, 1
House libraries, 72
Howe, Louis McHenry, 85, 86
Howell, George R., *por.*, 51
acting State Librarian, 51
archivist, 63, 93
Humphry, John A., 110
Hunkers, 15
Hunt, Governor Washington, 31, 32

I

Indian treaties, lost in fire, 91
Innovations
Melvil Dewey's programs, 64-65
reference and research programs, 110
Interlibrary book exchange, establishment, 20-24
Interlibrary loans, Dewey a prophet of, 72
International exchange of books, 12
initiation of, 20-24
Inventory, initial, 6
Irish Greens, 1
Iron links of West Point chain, 39; *illus.*
safe after fire, 91
Irving, Washington, 21
Itinerant libraries, 71-73

J

Jackson, President Andrew, 10
Jacobsen, Edna L., 109
James, Duke of York, 28
James, Henry, 15
Jameson, Dr. J. Franklin, 88
Jesuit Relations, 105
John Cook's Reading Room and Library, 2
Johnson, Guy, 36
Johnson, Sir William, Papers, 6, 36
loss in fire, 91
Joint Legislative Committee, 15, 16

K

Kane, James, 17
Keck, Charles, sculptor, 101
Kent, Chancellor James, 1, 4; *por.*, 4
library trustee, 5
signs first report, 6

L

Lafayette, Marquis de, 20
Lake Placid Club, 75-78
original clubhouse, *illus.*, 74

Law books, early, 9
in 1848, 26
Law establishing State Library, 5
Law librarian
Alfred Street, 29, 44
Stephen Griswold, 44, 63
Law Library
Codex Theodosianus, 15
destroyed in fire, 95
Capitol, quarters in, 25
in new Capitol, 50
Education Building location, 101
modernization program, 109
reopening after fire, 103
separate from miscellaneous department, 12
Laws of 1833, purchase of Audubon's Ornithology, 16
Ledyard, Henry, 35
Legislative acts
appropriation for library rooms in Capitol, 51
for purchase of papers of George Clinton, 36
for Warden Collection, 35
for Washington relics, 42
building act passed, 31
documents directed to Library's care, 27
Education Building, site and erection of, 82-83
Regents constituted as trustees, 17
Legislative Library, established, 104
Legislative Reference Library beginning, 63
location in Education Building, 101
reopening after fire, 103
Legislators, book privileges and responsibilities, 9
Legislature, book exchange, appropriation voted for, 22-23
Librarian, qualifications and requirements, 1844, 16-17
See also State Librarian
Libraries
Chancellor James Kent, 1
DeWitt Clinton, 1
in New York State in 1817, 2
John Cook's Reading Room and Library, 2
Library-aid law, 110
Library committee, legislative, 15-16
Library Development, Division of, 110
Director, 111
Library Extension Division, 72
renamed, 110, 111
traveling libraries, 71
Library Extension and Adult Education, Division of, 110
Library Hall, in new Capitol Building, 45
Golden Corridor, *illus.*, 48
Library of Congress, 2
fire, 32
loan of restoration expert after fire, 95
Melvil Dewey's advice sought for, 65
Vattemare appointed international agent for, 21
Library school
beginning of new careers for women, 67-70
Education Building, 102
first, 59
transferred to State Library, 68
faculty, *por.*, 68
returned to Columbia University, 70
Library service, extension activities, 110
Lincoln, Abraham
Emancipation Proclamation, original draft of, 40; *illus.*
funeral train, 44
Loan desk, Capitol library, 54
Loans, *see* Borrowing privileges
Locked cases, 18, 25
Warden Collection, 36
Losses, books, 17, 18
in Library fire, 91
Lottery, Emancipation Proclamation prize of, 41
Low, Will H., mural panels, 101, 104

M

Maher, James, State Librarian, 11-13
Main reading room, *see* Reading rooms
Manor Papers, 37
lost in fire, 91
Manuscripts
Freedom Train exhibit of, 109
losses in fire, 88, 91
salvaged after fire, 93-96
See also Historic documents
Manuscripts Section, beginning, 63
foundation for, 36
salvage activities after fire, 93-95
Maps, in first library, 6
Marcy, Governor William L., 12
Marshall, Louis, 77
Martial law, after Capitol fire, 88
Medical Library, beginning of, 63
destroyed by fire, 95
location in Education Building, 101
modernization program, 109
reopening after fire, 103
Melvil Dewey Professorship of Library Service established at Columbia University, 80
Miscellaneous Library
charter of Charles II in, 28
Law Library separated from, 12
new quarters in Capitol, 25
becomes General Library, 44
Morgan, William, 11
Morning Times, gift of, 104
Mullins, Colonel John, 85, 86
Music services suggested, 64

N

National defense efforts in World War I, 104
Natural History of New York, 15
Natural History Survey, publication, 21
New Netherlands colony, early records, fate in fire, 94
New York *Herald,* 20
New York Historical Society, prods for preservation of documentary material, 27
"New York idea" of a State Library, 104
New York Institution, 4
New York Library Association, organization, 63
New York National Guard, patrol after fire, 93, 94
New York State Freedom Train, 109
New York State Library School, 68-70
  faculty, *illus.*, 68
  study room, *illus.*, 69
  transfer to Columbia University, 70
New York's colonial session laws, 1736-1743, 108
Newell, Theodore, 6
Newspaper files, gifts to, 104
  lost in fire, 91
Northern Light, 26, 28
  front page, *illus.*, 27

O

Oakley, Assemblyman Thomas J., 4
O'Callaghan, Dr. Edmund B., interest in collection and preservation of early documents, 28
  work on Johnson Papers, 36
O'Dell, Governor Benjamin B., Jr., 79
100th Anniversary, 104
Order, need for preservation of, 43
Orrery, acquisition, 6
Our Travels, 106
Overcrowding, 7
  need while awaiting Capitol building, 45
  needs in Capitol, 81
  problems in 1849, 31 in 1945, 109

P

Paintings lost in fire, 91
Palmer & Hornbostel, architects, 83
Paltsits, Victor Hugo, 94
Pamphlets, number in 1822, 7
Papineau, Louis J., 28
Parchment scroll, 28
People's University, State Library as, 64, 71-73
Pepper, Calvin, 2nd State Librarian, 9-11
Periodical Library, 101, 103
Perry, Isaac G., 49, 53, 55
  builder-architect of Capitol, 49-50
Philipse, Adolph, 108
Photography, 64
Picture collection started, 64
Planetarium, 7
Police guard, 43
Politics, charges of, 12-13, 79
Pope Gregory XVI, 31
Pownall, Thomas, 94
Prentiss, S. Gilbert, 110
Provincial Assembly, laws of, 28
Pruyn, Chancellor John V. L., 28, 45, 55
Public Instruction, Department of
  consolidation with University of the State of New York, 72
  dichotomy between Board of Regents and, 63
Public library, State Library not intended to be, 43
Public library systems, 110
Public records, Manuscripts Section, 63
  See also Historic documents
Putnam, Herbert, 95
  letter to Regents in defense of Melvil Dewey, 78

R

R. T. Ford Company, contractor for Education Building, 83, 91, 97
  penalty for delay in construction, 91
Readers
  boom in depression years, 105
  Capitol Library and Children's Library, 64
  See also Borrowing privileges; Use of library
Reading rooms
  Capitol, 50, 53-54; *illus.*, 55-57 after fire, *illus,* 89, 90
  Education Building, 101 reopening after fire, 103; *illus.*
  State Street building, 31; *illus.*, 33
Records, early, fate in fire, 94
  See also Historic documents
Regents, Board of
  abolishment sought, 37, 54
  dichotomy between Department of Public Instruction and, 63
  donations from French government and M. Vattemare, 21-22
  governing board of State Education Department, 72
  interest in Warden Collection, 35
  legislative requests in 1856, 33
  Melvil Dewey secretary of, 58
    censure of, 78
    letter from Herbert Putnam to, in defense of, 78
    petition for removal of, 77
    resignation as Secretary, 76
  not political office holders, 16

resolution protesting delay in completion of Education Building, 91
trustees of State Library, 16-18
Regents Library Council, reactivated, 110
Regional library systems, 110
Regulations, *see* Rules
Reid, Chancellor Whitelaw, 54
at dedication ceremonies, 103
Rensselaerswyck, Manor of, papers, 37
Reopening after fire, 103
Report, first, 6
Researchers, "paid held" for, 64
Restoration after fire
legislative act for, 96-97
responsibility of Dr. Wyer, 96
Reynold, Sir Joshua, Memoirs, 8
Richardson, H. H., 45, 48, 49, 50
Rockefeller, Governor Nelson, Governor's Library Conference, 110
Rockwell's Mansion House, 1
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 85
Roosevelt, Governor Theodore, 76
tribute to State Library, 65
Rotunda, Education Building, 101; *illus.*, 102
exhibit cases in, 105
Royal commissions, 28
Rules, admission to library, 1860, 43
legislators allowed to take out books, 9
revised, for conduct of library, 1878, 46-47

S

Safety measures, enclosed shelves, 18, 25
fire protection in Capitol, 81
St. Hilary, Geoffrey, 23
Salaries, first librarian, 5
1823, 9
1829, 12
1844, 17
1847, 27
Salvage activities, after fire, 93-96
Scenographia Americana, 106
School of Library Economy, 59
new careers for women, 67-70
See also Library school
Science, *Natural History of New York,* 15
Schuyler, Philip, letters, 105
Security measures, 18, 25
fire protection in Capitol, 81
Senate, Legislative Library established for, 104
Senate Documents, printing of library catalog in, 44
Service, disruption after fire, 101
"New York idea" of a State Library, 104
Sesquicentennial Year
computer devices explored, 110
Our Travels published in observance of, 106
Seward, Frederick W., 41
Seward, Governor William H., 12, 21, 40
documents forwarded by, 44
interest in State Library, 13-14
Sexton, Regent Pliny T., letters from Melvil Dewey to, 77, 79
Seymour, May, 63, 68
Shaker records, 105
Simplified spelling, 58
Sir William Johnson Papers, 6, 36
loss in fire, 91
Site for Education Building, 82-83
Skinner, Elisha W., 43
Sloughter, Henry, 28
Smith, Alfred E., 85
Smith, Gerrit, 41
South Mall, new home of Library, 111; *illus.*
Space, 7
general reading room, Education Building, 101
needs, in Capitol, 81
while awaiting Capitol building, 45
problems in 1849, 31, in 1945, 109
Sparks, Jared, 35
Spelling, simplified, 58
Spoils system, 10, 12, 13
Spy papers, Benedict Arnold-Major Andre conspiracy, 37; *illus.*, 38
rescued from fire, 87
Stack corridor, *illus.*, 107
Stacks, in Capitol, 53
in Education Building, 83, 101, 102, 109
Staff, additional assistant librarian, 32
State aid for public libraries, 110
State Capitol, first home of Library, 5; *illus.*, 7
State Capitol, new
date declared finished, 53
Dewey library innovations, 64
Golden Corridor, 49; *illus.*, 48
library becomes entity in, 25
move into Golden Corridor and Court of Appeals court room, 49-51
move upstairs, 53-57; *illus.*
State Education Department, Unification Act creates, 72
State government, library for, 1
text of law enacting, 5
State Hall, documents stored in, 28
State Historian, 94
State Librarians, first, 5
Anderson, Edwin H., 80
Brown, Robert, 13-14
Cassidy, William, 15-17
Cook, John, 2-9
Dewey, Melvil, 58

Gavit, Joseph, Acting, 106, 108
Gosnell, Dr. Charles F., 109-110
Homes, Henry Augustus, 43-47
Maher, James, 11-13
Pepper, Calvin, 9-11
Prentiss, S. Gilbert, 110
political drama in turnover, 10
salary, 12, 27
Street, Alfred Billings, 26-29
Tillinghast, John L., 17
Vail, Robert W. G., 107-108
Wyer, Dr. James Ingersoll, 84
State libraries antedating New York's, 2
State Library, Director of, position created, 110
appointment of Mason Tolman as, 111
See also State Librarian
State Library, Education Building erected around, 83
efficiency commended by Governor Theodore Roosevelt, 65
law establishing, 5
most beautiful part of Capitol, 60
Regents try to make entity, 25
State Medical Society donation to Medical Library, 63
State Museum, 102
loss in Capitol fire, 90
sharing building with Library, 82
State Street Building, 31-33
demolition, 49-50
Stokes, I. N. Phelps, salvage work, 93-95
Stone, William L., 36
Stonecarvings in Capitol, 54; *illus.*, 55
Storage, need for, in Capitol, 81
Street, Alfred Billings, Law Librarian, 29, 44
request to preserve order in library, 43
State Librarian, 26-29
Subject libraries, development, 63, 101, 103
Sword of George Washington, *illus.*, 107
purchase, 41
rescued from fire, 94
Supervision and control by Board of Regents, 16-18

T

Tayler, Lt. Governor John, 36; *por.*, 3
library trustee, 5
owner of Johnson Papers, 6
signs first report, 6
Telephone, as innovation, 72
Teletype communications (TWX), 110
Thompson, Judge Smith, 1, 4, 5, 6
Throop, Judge Enos T., 10, 12
Tillinghast, John, State Librarian, 17
dismissal, 27
Titles, early purchases, 6, 9-10
Tolman, Dr. Frank L., *por.*, 105
book purchases after fire, 103
Chief of Library Extension Division, 72
Harold J. Fisher Memorial Award to, 73
leave to work at Camp Upton, 104
salvage work after fire, 95
son appointed Director of State Library, 111
Tolman, Mason, Director of State Library, 111
Tompkins, Governor Daniel D., 1
papers of, lost in fire, 91
Townsend, General Franklin, gift, 39
Traveling libraries, books on loan foundation of collection after fire, 96
circulation, 1941, 73
first, 71
phased out, 110
Traveling library for Albany, 64
Trinity Church, New York, 94
Troy *Sentinel*, 37
Trustees, board of, first, 5
1841, election, 15
library supervision and control, 16
Regency dominated, 9
Regents as, 16-18
report on purposes and use of library, 47
"20,000 Years of Comics," exhibit, 105
Typewriters, introduction of, 64

U

Unification Act of 1904, 72
Uniforms for library attendants, 64
United States Sanitary Commission, 41
University learning, library as extension of, 64, 71-73
University of the State of New York, Unification Act of 1904, 72
Use of library, not intended as public library, 43
revised regulations, 1878, 46-47
scope beyond legislated intent, 64
See also Borrowing privileges
Utica, Canal Commissioners, 1

V

Vail, Robert W. G. *por.*, 108
State Librarian, 107-108
Van Buren, John, 15
Van Buren, Martin, 1, 4, 9
Governor, 10
trustee of library, 12
United States Senator, 9
Vice President and President, 12, 15
Van Laer, A. J. F., salvage activities, 93-95
Van Rensselaer, General Stephen, 4, 11
Van Rensselaer, Kiliaen, 37
Van Rensselaer-Bowier manuscripts, 93
Van Rensselaer family letters, 105
Van Rensselaer Manor Papers, 91, 105
Vanderlyn, John, 36

Vattemare, Nicholas Marie Alexander, 19
international exchange of books initiated by, 19-24
Vault, 101; *illus.*, 107
Lincoln and Washington relics in, 42
Visitors, Capitol Library available to, 60
Volumes, capacity of State Street building, 31
foundation of collection after fire, 96
Law Library, 1898, 63
number lost in fire, 88
Volumes, number
in first library, 6
in 1822, 7
in 1848, 26
in 1850's catalog, 44
in 1883, 49
in 1900, 81
in 1930, 104
in 1945, 109

W

Wada, M., telegram from, 91
Wagner, Robert F., Sr., 85
Warden, David Bailie, *por.*, 36
acquisition of collection of, 35
Ware, Franklin B., 90
Washington, George, collection of personal belongings of, 41
dress sword and pistol, *illus.*, 107
Farewell Address, *illus.*, 42
rescued from fire, 87
Stuart painting of, lost in fire, 91
sword rescued from fire, 94
Washington, Colonel Lewis W., 41
Washington, Mrs. Lewis W., 42
Watertown Demonstration Project, 110
Weed, Thurlow, 4, 15
editorial duel, 13
sketch of Librarian Maher, 11
Wellesley Half Dozen, 67
Wendell, Chancellor Peter, 17, 35
West, opening of, effect on library's collection, 25
West Point, iron chain across river at, 39; *illus.*
safe after fire, 91
Whig Party, 11, 12, 13
Wiring inspection, after Capitol fire, 90
Woman's Library, Dewey innovation, 64
Women, library career for, 67-70
Woodworth, Florence, 68
Woolworth, Dr. S. B., 23
World War I, loans to camp libraries, 104
World War II, safeguarding of cultural treasures during, 107
Wright, Governor Silas, 25
Wyer, Dr. James Ingersoll, Jr., *por.*, 104
appointment as State Librarian, 84
farewell commencement of New York State Library School, 70
military effort of libraries, 104
quoted on causes of Capitol fire, 90
quoted, re Alfred B. Street, 26, 27
record tenure, 106
restoration of library after fire responsibility of, 96-97

Y

Yates, Governor Joseph G., 9